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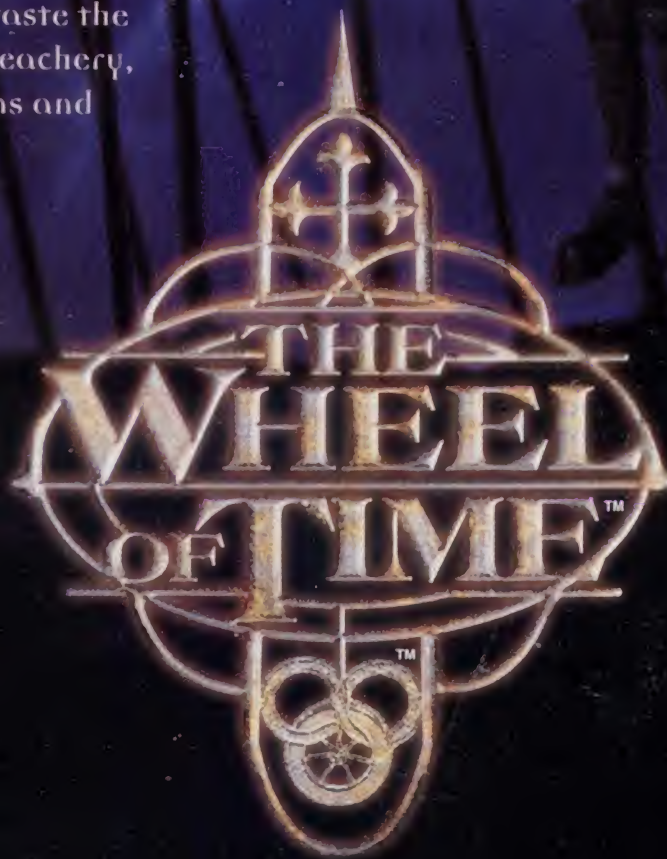
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ON THE COVER

We felt so strongly that Therese Nielsen was the best choice for this month's "Shapeshifter" theme that we also gave her one of the feature articles to illustrate. If you'd like to see more of Therese's swanmay, turn to page 34 and learn about our "Feathered Friends & Foes."



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Our chance for revenge came sooner than expected. Erellak Golgof had taken our money and betrayed us to the Yuridri, a band of airborne gypsies who wanted our blood. After our narrow escape from the trap, we hoped to face him again one day, but no one thought it would be so soon. Only two game sessions later, the treacherous gnome was at our mercy.

Since the betrayal, our characters had survived the flaming wreck of a soar whale, navigated the forbidden territory of the Circle of the Black Thorn, survived the dangers of the Horned Tower, and finally arrived at the aerie of a peaceful band of aarakocra. We figured it was time for a little R&R.

Our avian hosts were clear about the conditions of our visit: We'd be afforded every courtesy, but we had to be good guests. That didn't seem like a problem at first. The bird-folk were almost

unctuously pleasant, and the food was good. Before we could settled in, however, the ranger did a little scouting in the adjoining room. Three guesses whom he saw there.

Even if you don't know our group, you can guess the reaction of Sevet, the elf barbarian. It took three of us to keep him from going primal and mincing the gnome on the spot. That's not to say we didn't think he deserved it, but we'd already realized we were the Federation, Erellak was the Klingon, and the aarakocra were the Organians. In other words, we knew we'd suffer in the long run if we didn't resist the urge to fight with our enemy.

Chris, our DM, was tempting us with something we wanted—revenge—then giving us a good reason *not* to take it. It was denial at its most infuriating. And we *loved* it.

If we players had faced this scenario years ago, it probably would have had a

very different conclusion. No doubt there'd be a fight, maybe we'd put an end to Erellak, and certainly we'd offend the helpful aarakocra. As it was, with Jeff and Sean playing their decisive warriors in character, it was a group challenge to make sure we *didn't* get what we all initially wanted. We contented ourselves with a heated exchange of pointed words with the slippery Golgof. Finally, as much as we wanted to throw him

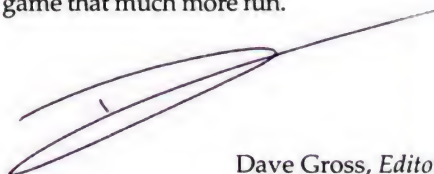
over the aerie walls, we agreed to let him depart in peace.

As Erellak left,

Chris gave us a little reward for our good behavior. Also leaving our custody was one of the Yuridri who had ambushed us. In an earlier spate of mercy (or cunning, depending on how you look at it), we had decided to let him go with a truce message for his people. After listening to our argument with Erellak, the Yuridri gave the gnome such a withering look that we knew interesting times were in store for the gnome.

Your group probably already knows what we recently learned—that deferred gratification, even in a game, is often better than immediate satisfaction. Tell us about the last time your characters let the bad guy escape or otherwise put off a personal goal, knowing that it made the game that much more fun.

**We wanted revenge,
but we couldn't take it.**



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Small Change

I want to give special thanks to Owen K.C. Stephens. His "By Any Other Name" series is a wonderful and brilliantly executed idea. Quick names for nonplayer characters are a great burden off of this Dungeon Master's shoulders.

I would also like to make a complaint. I am tired of everyone lumping gnomes and halflings together, from the *Complete Book of Gnomes and Halflings* to your most recent issue. No other race of beings has to suffer such indignity! What are you trying to say? Do they all look alike?

Steven Russell
Dayton, OH

I am tired of everyone lumping gnomes and halflings together.

No, we don't think gnomes and halflings look alike. We lump them together because it's easy and we're not afraid of them. What's the worst a halfling's going to do about it? Filch some cheese from our larder? Taunt our housecats? And those gnomes with their freakishly big noses—don't get us started! One more complaint, and we'll make 'em stand still and hold lamps in our gardens.

Equal Representation

As a female AD&D® roleplayer, and one who uses miniatures to act out battle scenes, I am starting to feel discriminated against when looking to miniatures to represent female warriors, rangers, spellcasters, and other characters. As Wizards of the Coast is now planning to produce their own miniatures, are there any plans to

include more female characters (and I do not mean barmaids) in the collection?

Jayne Linton
Whissendine, UK

Rest assured that the new official AD&D miniatures line includes female figures. The first releases will include human scullery maids, dwarven stable maids, elven chambermaids, and a combined blister pack of gnome and halfling pot scrubbers.

Chaz Elliot, Creative Director for the Miniatures Division, insists we note that the 3rd-Edition miniatures releases are scheduled to include both male and female versions of the iconic player characters. When asked

about the barmaid factor, he replied, "The concepts show women as just as evil, nasty, hard, rip-your-head-off tough as the guys and the monsters."

He's even shown us the first group of new AD&D miniatures. They include fantastic female characters—and not an apron among them.

Who Came First?

There is a problem in the "The Oeridian Lesser Gods" articles in issues #263 and #264.

The description of Atroa in issue #263 says "Atroa is the youngest of the three daughters of Velnius." Yet, in issue #264 the description of Sotillion says, "Sotillion is the daughter of Velnius and the twin sister of Atroa. The sisters look nothing alike; though Sotillion looks

older, she is actually slightly younger than her sister."

Charlie Crook
Tampa, FL

Atroa's been lying about her age since she turned 29, approximately 4,871 years ago. To complicate matters, Sotillion threatened us with a thousand days and nights of rain if we printed that she was the elder sister. Considering that she's basically the Lady of Laziness and that we live near Seattle, we were not intimidated.

Considering the importance this difference is likely to have on your campaign, we rushed to consult top GREYHAWK® scholars about the matter. Unfortunately, they've been locked in flamewars with each other ever since, so we flipped a coin. *Tails: Atroa is the younger twin.*

Secrets Revealed

I have a question about 3rd Edition secret #2 from issue #264. Why have you added a 20% cumulative penalty to multi-classed experience? That doesn't make much sense to me. I've been playing for 8–10 years now, and I recently began playing my first triple-classed character, a half-elven fighter/mage/thief. I'm already falling way behind. My single-classed companions are rising remarkably faster than my character, and our DM complains about the division he has to perform. Now, with your new 20% rule, my character would have an additional 40% penalty, and you've just added another factor into my DM's calculations. He'll grumble at me, for sure, and I'll reduce my snail's pace of advancement by nearly half.

The division of experience is penalty enough for multiclass characters. It took me forever just to reach 2nd level.

Keep in Touch!

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Certainly, 20% seems excessive. If you feel a penalty is warranted, perhaps there's some other way to impose it. Perhaps for every additional class added beyond the first, you must take one trait that's the worst of the classes involved, whether it be saving throws, THAC0, armor restrictions, or some other class-dependent attribute.

I'm having trouble deciding how I feel about the removal of demihuman level limits and class restrictions. I accepted the old rationale for level limits, but now you've simply thrown that to the wind.

Also, now that any class combination is allowed, I could conceivably create a ranger/necromancer/ninja/specialty priest/psionicist with an 80% experience penalty. Ugh.

With the addition of human multiclass ability, is dual-classing still an option? Is it open to demihumans, now?

Also, since I'm commenting on your secrets, I'm glad you fixed up your armor class rules. It's about time!

Secrets #3-7 neither bother me nor make me jump for joy, I can absorb those rules without even pausing.

Secrets #8-10 are very interesting, however. I like the changes to bonus spells and healing. You've pretty much ripped out half of the Healing sphere, however. Paladins are the only characters who'll ever memorize the *cure light wounds* spell, now. *Cure critical wounds* is useless. The reverse of each spell probably fits more closely into the Necromantic sphere. You've also opened up healing abilities to priests who've had limited or no access to them before. I'm very interested in seeing what else you have to say. Will there be a new secret revealed each month?

Adam Lachapelle
North Chelmsford, MA

Keep in mind that the ten secrets we revealed in October are merely simulations of the new system. Only one of those ten items was exactly the same as the new rule, and even that one is subject to change during the playtest process. For a better explanation of those secrets, here's D&D® game designer Jonathan Tweet:

"You're right that it would be a bogus rule to add an XP penalty to the 2nd-edition multiclass rules. Instead, 3rd edition has all-new multiclass rules.

PLAYER OF THE MONTH

Although the *DRAGON® Magazine* editors often play games together, they don't have an official "staff campaign." If they did, it would be Chris Perkins's Arveniar campaign, the chronicles of which occasionally find their way into Dave's editorials. It's an odd campaign, since almost everyone in it is a game designer or magazine editor.

Among such veteran players, it's hard to pick one who stands out. Since we're still awaiting for letters about *your* players and DMs of the month, we chose Jeff Quick for this month's accolades.

"I nominated him because his character died last week," explains Dave. "I guess you could call it a pity vote."

"Jeff plays Sevet, an elf barbarian from the Vempeth Forest," explains Chris. "Unlike the 'civilized' elves who dwell in the crystalline spires of Silaquel, the Vempeth elves are wild and unabashed—two traits that Jeff easily mimics.

"Jeff set the tone of his character at the outset by playing Sevet as a socially inept, easily irritated fellow who was a bit too quick (if you'll pardon the pun) with his sword. But Jeff has also allowed Sevet to grow since those formative sessions; the barbarian's loyalty to his companions has, in recent weeks, taught him to be more cautious and open-minded when others' lives are at stake."

One of the hallmarks of Jeff's roleplaying is that he remains true to his character's experiences. "He understands that characters are not all-knowing," says Chris. "Case in point: As a player, Jeff knows that mummies are immune to non-magical weapons. However, when Sevet confronted a mummy in the streets of Rethaq, he laid into her with his nonmagical longsword, oblivious to the futility of his action, and had the blade torn from his hand. One of the reasons why Jeff is an outstanding player is that he lets his characters make their own discoveries—even if the experiences are harrowing."—Doug Monkey



Player of the Month:
Jeff "Zippy" Quick

"As to healing, yes, clerics now have more access to healing than ever before. The rule of spontaneously healing others by swapping out a memorized spell, however, applies only to good clerics (or neutral clerics of good deities, or neutral clerics who worship neutral deities but "lean" toward good). Evil clerics (or neutral clerics of evil deities, or neutral clerics who worship neutral deities but "lean" toward evil) can swap out a memorized spell to deal damage."

Unlike priests, Jonathan notes, druids can't swap spells for healing. Also, dual-classing is gone from the game, since humans can multiclass just like any other race.

Keep an eye on "Countdown to 3rd Edition" for more!

Dragons By Design

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to Giorgio Mariani's criticism in *DRAGON Magazine* #263 of my article

"Draconic Design," which appeared three issues earlier.

Creating new species is the standard method for dealing with players who know the regular dragons too well, but creating an entirely new and credible monster out of whole cloth takes some time. Creatures created via the tables in my article would be bogus species at best, as I made quite clear; the DM should use as many of the standard AD&D dragon's statistics as possible.

Physical attacks such as biting cause the same amount of damage if the template is shaped like a carnosaur, a crocodile, or a giant snapping turtle. If the dragon's physical form precludes some of them, make substitutes whenever possible. For example, if a "new" green dragon has a limbless, serpentine body, lump all of its clawing attacks together in a single constriction attack, while one with the head of a triceratops

would inflict goring damage equal to that of a bite from a normally shaped dragon. And, of course, the creature's physical appearance has nothing to do with its breath weapon.

Whenever possible, changes in the dragon's appearance should be cosmetic only, whipped up for the specific purpose of fooling the players into thinking that they are dealing with an entirely new species. That is the entire purpose of my suggestion to drop the standard AD&D dragon appearance in many cases and use the new templates. DMs

are listed in the rules as having an Animal intelligence, make a habit of sneaking up on their prey and attacking from behind, which seems to make them at least as clever as your ordinary thief attempting a Backstab. If all you knew about dinosaurs was what you saw in *Jurassic Park*, would you regard the door-opening velociraptors as having Animal, Low, or Human intelligence?

Animal instinct can do a great deal of what human intelligence can, at least in specific areas such as hunting. Often this effect is tied to the creature's physical

be a lot of junk mixed in with the good stuff, but why should PCs automatically find a treasure stacked in neat piles simply because they managed to butcher the previous owner? Make them work for their treasure by forcing them to root around piles of leaves, colored stones, and other miscellany, particularly since the extra time they spend means more time for other monsters to come around to investigate all that noise.

In short, animal instincts can work as well as the intelligence of their human opponents in the limited, life-and-death environments where PCs are most likely to face them. Remember that a tiger who sees potential prey approaching instinctively prepares an ambush, while a party of PCs might choose to do so only after spending an hour's worth of time arguing about their options. A dragon operating on instinct is just as dangerous in battle as one of human- or genius-level intelligence. Combine this fact with uncertainty about what type of dragon the party is actually facing, and you will always have a nasty shock ready for those characters who spend part of their ill-gotten gains on bestiaries as an excuse for their players who are familiar with existing varieties of dragons.

Gregory Detwiler
Williamsburg, PA

A nimal instinct can do a great deal of what human intelligence can ...

using the "old dragons in new bodies" approach know that it is basically an old AD&D dragon, but the players know only what their characters can see, that is, what the DM chooses to tell them. As far as they can tell, the DM is churning out new species like there's no tomorrow, when all the DM is really doing is recycling old foes.

The intelligence issue is also overrated, as "dumb animals" are capable of some seemingly clever tricks due to instinct. If building traps takes intelligence, what do we make of the nearly brainless spider that spins a web? The ambush technique of waiting for prey to blunder into range is used by creatures as diverse as sea anemones, barnacles, trap-door spiders, rattlesnakes, and leopards, to say nothing of humans. Beasts such as tigers and jaguars, which

form—the crocodile's success at ambush hunting depends at least as much on the fact that it looks like a floating log when partially submerged as on the fact that it is the most intelligent reptile alive today.

Think tool use requires human-style intelligence? An octopus (admittedly the most intelligent of the invertebrates) in captivity learned how to get at a captive shrimp in a bottle by pulling out the stopper. A species of thrush cracks open snail shells by using a stone as an improvised anvil, and sea otters likewise use stones to crack open mollusk shells. Of course, apes and monkeys use tools all of the time.

For those players who equate Animal intelligence with no treasure, I must point out a few of the treasure-gathering animals of our own world, such as pack rats, jackdaws, and ravens. These animals, and creatures like them, love to grab shiny stuff, which is what most human treasure consists of. Sure, there'll

Thanks to everyone who sent us comments this month. Don't forget that we're still looking for new Players and DMs of the Month, as well as your impressions of the upcoming 3rd Edition game. Naturally, we'd like to know what you think of the most recent issue, too. Tell us what you want, and chances are good that we'll have it for you a few issues later!



By Aaron Williams



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Question of the Month

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**HOW DO THE PLAYERS IN YOUR GAME
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Dishonest DMs

The question of the month, "When is it all right for the DM to give blatantly false information to the players," leaves room for much criticism of DMs.

As far as the characters are concerned, DMs hold in their hands, minds, and notebooks the world that shaped them. If the false information is from an NPC with questionable character, misleading the players is allowable, because NPCs should respond only according to their natures. But the world turns black when the character of the DM is the only reason for fooling the players.

Manipulating the player's perceptions can be taken too seriously; DMs flesh out the campaign with mood and sometimes environmental chaos. My characters have been killed because of irritated or forgetful DMs.

Lie Like a Rug

This concerns the Issue #263 Question of the Month: "When is it all right for the DM to give blatantly false information to the players?" The answer is simple: whenever the DM feels that the fun of the game would be improved for all involved.

That's too general a comment for most occasions, though. Blatant lies come in two categories: roleplaying-based and game-based.

Roleplaying-based lying is often necessary when dealing with a dishonest or misinformed NPC. For example, the PCs might need to cross a mountain range to complete an adventure. They also know that the mountains are filled with bandits or monsters, and that there are three paths through the mountain range. By talking to NPCs, they discover that two

NPC is not lying; he believes that a rumor based on faulty information is true. Later on, the PCs, after having traversed the "safe" path, might come looking for that NPC for revenge.

Deliberate misinformation on the part of the DM can lead to any number of adventures in this manner.

Game-related lying is also often necessary. Certain activities, such as finding secret doors and traps, should always be rolled secretly by the DM. For example, if the PCs are severely wounded and deep in a dungeon, the DM might pretend to roll a secret door check. *Voilà*—one of them spots it, thereby allowing them to escape the dungeon or at least find a safe area to rest.

On the other hand, maybe the DM thinks the PCs are having an easy adventure and wants to toughen it up. Perhaps the DM had included a secret door that would allow the PCs to bypass a number of dangerous rooms. The players announce that their PCs are checking for secret doors. The DM doesn't want them to find it, so he rolls the dice and then says that they don't find anything.

If the DM secretly rolls NPC die results (in combat, for example), it is also acceptable to lie, if the game is enhanced as a result. For example, one particular die rolled secretly by an NPC might mean that a PC or a favorite NPC dies; the DM announces a different result to the players.

**Julian Neale
Cheshire, England**

Blatant lies come in two categories: roleplaying-based and game-based.

DMs are sometimes partial to players and occasionally lie about dice rolls. This is called partiality, and it is dishonest. The sun should rise and set the same for all players, but the DM's desire for guiding the story sometimes wins the day, bringing PCs to an untimely death. There are many potentially long-lived characters who die because of DMs who don't stick with the rules.

The 3rd-Edition *Player's Handbook* should come with a hammer that knocks sense into the DM when he or she is too strict, too lenient, or too willing to give out false information.

Name and Address Withheld

paths are regarded as dangerous, and one is safe. Hardly anyone knows which path is the safe one. The DM knows that the players will enjoy the game more if their PCs take one of the dangerous paths but doesn't tell the players that. Instead, the DM has a few options to influence the PCs' actions. One NPC speaking to the PCs might be a bandit who thinks the PCs are an easy and wealthy mark; he directs them down the path dominated by his fellows. On the other hand, the DM might introduce an NPC who is ignorant of which path is safe; maybe he or she heard a rumor and repeats it to the PCs. Technically, the

Rogue Rants

Almost every class in the D&D® game has a clearly defined role, one that is essential to a well-rounded, successful

party. Warriors absorb damage and provide the front line in combat, mages hurl spells and offer their party magical protection, and priests provide a useful combination of spells and combat ability. That leaves us with the rogue.

Outside of scouting, the traditional D&D thief doesn't have an essential role. If you were going to send a high-level party to confront Lolth in the Abyss, and you had to do it with no characters from one of the four basic classes, which could you do without? The answer is always obvious—the thief.

Thieves' shortcomings are that they have too little offensive and defensive power and that their skills are not universally useful. In addition, other classes can duplicate thief abilities with spells. The poor, politically oppressed thief needs a major revamping.

Addressing the thief problem requires several changes. First, a better hit die and THAC0 are essential. That a spell-wielding priest—who can wear any armor—has superior combat potential to a thief is completely beyond me. Quite simply, the thief should have the priest's THAC0 and Hit Dice. Rogues are continually in conflict and should be prepared to deal with it. Of course, the exceptions to this are specialty priests who worship deities of war or combat.

Beyond basic combat ability, the thief has no significant offense. Warriors can deal out loads of damage with every strike. Mages and priests can wreak havoc with a variety of spells. The thief has nothing comparable. The thief's Backstab ability is limited by circumstance, and it does not provide the thief with enough offensive capacity overall.

A 15th-level thief who successfully backstabs with a *short sword* +4 can inflict a maximum of 34 points of damage, assuming the thief is of average strength. Ridiculous and preposterous. Now, consider the amount of damage 15th-level warriors or mages can inflict. Every PC fears the *fireball* of the mage and crossing blades with weapon masters, yet no one fears the backstab of the thief because players worth their salt know that the damage, relatively speaking, is going to be minimal. Bearing in mind that this is the only offense the thief has, it is easy to see why so few players opt to play a thief.

I suggest making Backstab a skill that has varying levels of expertise, much like the way weapon mastery expands the skill range of fighters. A masterful rogue at one's back should produce apprehension.

On a similar note, many of the thief's skills, like Backstab, do not have universal application. As a result, the thief has an arsenal of skills that languish because they are just not needed often. Pick Pockets, Tunneling, and Open Locks are fine skills, but they are not useful under many conditions. Warriors, mages, and priests have combat abilities or spell repertoires that allow them to be useful at nearly all times.

The poor, politically oppressed thief needs a major revamping.

Many of the thief's skills are available to other classes, which further reduces the incentive to play a thief. Many of the ranger's skills and a wide variety of spells diminish the party's need for a thief. Indeed, a mid-level mage, with a carefully chosen selection of spells, can perform a thief's role. With a level playing field and game balance as the ultimate goal, it is unreasonable that any class can function better as a thief than the thief can.

Long-time players might point out that the thief needs the fewest experience points to go up levels. This inequality, although thought to be in the thief's favor, is part of the problem. Keeping the experience totals for level advancement low only enforces the notion that the thief just isn't quite up to playing with the big kids.

When I first started playing, I wanted to create a character whose skill was stealth based, sort of a medieval spy or special agent. My DM informed me that I needed to roll up a thief. This made no sense when A Flock of Seagulls were hot, and it still makes no sense. The class, as put forth in the *Player's Handbook*, is defined by thieving, and this is obviously reinforced by its very name.

I propose a less-specialized class that utilizes stealth in a wider variety of ways. Call it an operative, a stalker, or a

commando—the name is not particularly relevant. Specifics, such as the character's propensity to steal, should be handled through kits.

Lance Goetz
Portland, OR

Who Goes First?

My group has made a few changes to the initiative system. PCs now have an initiative modifier based on the formula of Intelligence + Dexterity divided by 8. This takes into account the character's ability to figure out the best course of action (Intelligence), and the agility to pull it off (Dexterity). This results in a modifier of 2 or 3 for most characters

and a very rare 4 for exceptional characters. All fractions are rounded down.

This has had a couple effects; we have very few dimwitted fighters; they see the advantage of having a high Intelligence. It also offsets the weapon speed somewhat and even spellcasting times. Since we play with the individual initiative system, our rounds are now divided into segments starting at less than zero, and ending up at fifteen. After fifteen we simply lump any final actions in to one "end of the round" phase in which any extra attacks or spell effects are resolved.

For monster initiative, I use the straight die roll for their action. Somewhat unfair, I agree, but who really wants to calculate a creature's Intelligence, Dexterity, and weapon speed modifier? My players have no problem with giving creatures this slight advantage, and for important NPC encounters, I calculate the modifiers.

I roll and record the initiative rolls ahead of time for planned encounters. About 3 rounds worth of rolls is generally enough.

This system has proven to work very well in the past couple years, and everyone enjoys the chance to offset some of those slow weapon speeds, leading to a greater variety of weapons in the game.

David Boyer
Virginia Beach, VA



By Ray Winninger

In this installment and the next, we'll examine some general guidelines that should help you create the sort of fun, engrossing adventures that your players will recount to bemused GEN CON® Game Fair acquaintances for many years to come. In the installments that follow, we'll put these guidelines to work and create an actual adventure, paying particular attention to how the most important decisions are made.

Good, compelling adventures are so important to the AD&D® game that they demand a Fourth Rule of Dungeoncraft: *Always challenge both the players and their characters.*

This rule means that a good adventure works on two levels. On the first, it poses a challenge to the players—it makes them think carefully and causes them to wonder for just a brief moment whether they are truly up to the task of overcoming its many obstacles. Once complete, great adventures provide the players with the same satisfaction they might receive upon finally completing a challenging level of a video game. This sense of satisfaction arises from the players' perception that it was their own skillful maneuvering and decision-making that led to success, not mere random luck or charity on your part. Balancing adventures so they challenge the players without overcomplicating the situation or causing confusion is one

of the trickiest parts of adventure design.

On the second level, good adventures always provide a challenge for the players' characters. In general, this means that you give the heroes opportunities to use their powers, proficiencies, and abilities. After all, it's no fun owning a *vorpall blade* if you never get to use it. For many players, part of the attraction of the AD&D game is that it allows them to play the roles of brave adventurers who can accomplish almost superhuman feats. To satisfy these players, you must give them a chance to flex their characters' muscles. In much the same way that you strive to balance the adventures to the players' capabilities, you must also balance the adventures to the capabilities of their characters. If the feats of derring-do you ask them to attempt are too easy—say, a high-level party pitted against an inconsequential goblin tribe—they'll soon become bored. On the other hand, if the obstacles you place in their path are obviously well beyond the PCs' capabilities, the players will soon become frustrated. Fortunately, this part isn't as hard as it might sound. While balancing an adventure to challenge the characters isn't as simple as falling off a log, it's usually much easier to accomplish than properly testing the players.

Since it's the more difficult task, let's first consider some specific tactics to challenge the players.

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Make the Players Make Decisions

The best way to make sure the players remain involved in your adventure is to offer them the opportunity to make plenty of decisions. Decision-making gives the players a sense of empowerment and reinforces the idea that their destinies lie in their own hands. In a typical AD&D adventure, decisions can take on many forms. Is it best to enter the dungeon via the cave mouth or through the large oaken door? Should we accept the elves' offer of assistance? Is it wise to venture down to the next level of the dungeon? Or should we return to town and heal our wounds? In many ways, the heart of every good adventure is a series of options. As you create your dungeon maps and individual encounters, you should definitely keep this in mind. Strive to offer the players a number of approaches to all the most important situations likely to arise during the adventure.

Examples

Suppose a band of evil cultists has captured the elven queen and taken her back to their mountain stronghold, where they hope to offer her as a sacrifice to their dark god. (And yes, I know this is an appalling cliché. Remember, this is just a simple example!) This situation leads to several ways you can cause the players to make important decisions.

Catch up on past installments of *Dungeoncraft*
<http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp>

The Road Less Traveled: Present the players with two possible routes to reach the stronghold. The first might be short but very dangerous; the second might be longer but relatively safe. During play, these two alternatives force the players to make an interesting choice. The queen might be sacrificed at any moment, so time is of the essence. But the dangers of the shorter route threaten to damage the party before they reach the stronghold, possibly ruining their chances of defeating the cultists once the PCs arrive. This conundrum is likely to provoke an interesting and lively debate among the players.

Strength or Stealth: Once the PCs arrive at the stronghold, you might confront them with several possible entrances. The first is a well-guarded main gate, where small mobs of hooded cultists regularly arrive and depart. The second is a doorway located just off a parapet that lies at the top of a steep cliff. Although the main gate is quite secure, the constant traffic might give the player heroes an opportunity to waylay some passing cultists, disguise themselves in the cultists' robes, and attempt to enter the stronghold using trickery. The parapet entrance is probably the easier to negotiate. To reach it, however, a character must pass a series of Climb Walls rolls to scale the cliff and drop a rope down to her comrades.

The Enemy of My Enemy: Finally, once inside the stronghold, the party might discover an imprisoned evil sorcerer who is also being held captive by the cultists. If the PCs free him, the sorcerer promises to help them rescue the queen and defeat the cultists once and for all. Whether the sorcerer can be trusted is hard to determine. While he might prove quite an asset, it's also possible that he'll betray the party to pursue his own agenda. Freeing him might even endanger the party's mission.

Whenever you build a decision point into your adventure, give the players some idea of the consequences that they can expect to accompany the choices they make. In other words, asking the players to enter a dungeon through one of two seemingly identical doors isn't really offering them a choice at all. Unless they have some information upon which to base their decision,

you're asking them to perform the mental equivalent of flipping a coin. When setting up your decision points, try to associate some obvious possible advantages and drawbacks with each option. As they approach those two identical doors, for instance, suppose the players hear muffled screams beyond the first door and nothing beyond the second.

THE FOUR RULES OF DUNGEONCRAFT

1

Never force yourself to create more than you must.

2

Whenever you design a major piece of the campaign world, always devise at least one secret related to that piece.

3

Whenever you have no idea what the probability of success should be for a particular situation, consider it 50%.

4

Challenge both the characters and the players.

Now their choice suddenly becomes quite interesting. If they choose the first door, they're bound to encounter some immediate danger, but they might have an opportunity to come to the aid of the screamer. If they choose the second door, they might have an opportunity to enter the dungeon unnoticed, but they might reach the screamer too late to be of assistance.

Have Players Solve Puzzles

Another way to engage the players is to confront them with puzzles or riddles. While magical tricks and traps are obvious methods for injecting such obstacles into your adventures, there are much subtler ways to accomplish the same goal. It's possible to disguise puzzles so they're not so obvious as such.

Suppose that the PCs come to the end of a dungeon corridor to find an obvious door 20 feet up the wall, but no way to reach that door. The rope ladder that normally hangs down is missing, the wall is too smooth for climbing, and there is nothing up the wall that a grappling hook might catch. Although it might not seem like it, this is actually a puzzle. The solution is to realize that the lumber and tools the players found a few rooms earlier can be used to hammer together a makeshift ladder that allows them to reach the door. In fact, asking the players to figure out how to use the items they find in one part of the dungeon to overcome obstacles they find in another part of the same dungeon is a time-honored tactic.

Sometimes, this same technique is taken one step further, and the players are asked to take two items they found in disparate parts of the dungeon and combine them to make a third item they need to circumvent an obstacle. You could employ this variation on an earlier example by placing the lumber in one room and the tools in a second room. It's then up to the players to realize that these two items can be combined to build the ladder that will allow them to reach the elevated door.

In general, as you design an adventure, look for opportunities to make the players draw logical conclusions or remember things they saw earlier to accomplish important goals. The entrance to the mad cultists' sacrifice chamber might be a secret door activated by touching a specific portion of a mural painted on the wall. If the players pay attention, they should notice that this mural is identical to several they saw earlier in the stronghold in every respect save one, and it is this single incongruous detail that marks the activation point.

In accordance with the first guideline, you might design your puzzles so they can be solved in several different ways. This is actually easier than it sounds, since the average party of adventurers has access to an impressive collection of skills, items, and abilities. The elevated doorway, for example, can be solved with a *jump* spell, a *fly* spell, or *boots of striding and springing*. If the players miss the lumber (depending upon the circumstances), they might opt to leave the dungeon to memorize the appropriate spell or hire someone capable of casting it for them.

In fact, many AD&D players are so resourceful that it is sometimes okay to build minor puzzles into your adventures that have no intended solution. Suppose, for instance, that somewhere within the first few levels of your dungeon is a deep pool of clear water with a glowing magical sword at its bottom. The pool is too deep for any adventurer to hold his or her breath and reach the bottom. At the time you create this adventure, you don't have to have any idea how the players might retrieve the sword—maybe they'll think of some-

thing, and maybe they won't. Even if they fail, you'll at least give them something interesting to think about.

3) Give the Players Interesting Opportunities for Interaction

One of the biggest attractions of the AD&D game is the opportunity to role-play a heroic, well-rounded character. Many players take pride in inventing interesting personalities and enjoy the opportunity to interact with colorful NPCs. Thus, another way to keep the players engaged is to provide them with particularly interesting opportunities for roleplaying. You might, for example, call upon a PC to console the young princess in the wake of her mother's death, or you might ask another to compose a ballad capable of settling down an inn full of rowdy patrons. Generally, those scenes that are the most melodramatic or the liveliest have the best roleplaying potential.

This third tactic is too frequently overlooked when constructing dungeon adventures. Don't forget that your monsters should have personalities. You should strive to provide the players with

opportunities to interact with your monsters, even within dungeon settings. Instead of the four fire giants pounding the heroes until they are dead, what if the giants merely subdue the heroes and then play a game of cards among themselves to decide which giant earns the right to kill the captives? Such a situation allows clever players an opportunity to talk themselves into the game somehow or convince three of the giants that the fourth is somehow cheating, possibly precipitating a timely escape. At the very least, you should give the players an opportunity to exchange words with the monsters while they are fighting. The mixture of threats and clever quips that tends to accompany most battles can be quite satisfying itself.

Join me here in 30 days, when we'll consider some specific tactics for engaging the player's characters, plus a brief list of dos and don'ts for adventure designers.

Ray Wimmer lives in Evanston, Illinois, though this is the first installment of "Dungeoncraft" he's written from that location in many months.

Another night in...



NICE HAT.

DROP DEAD.

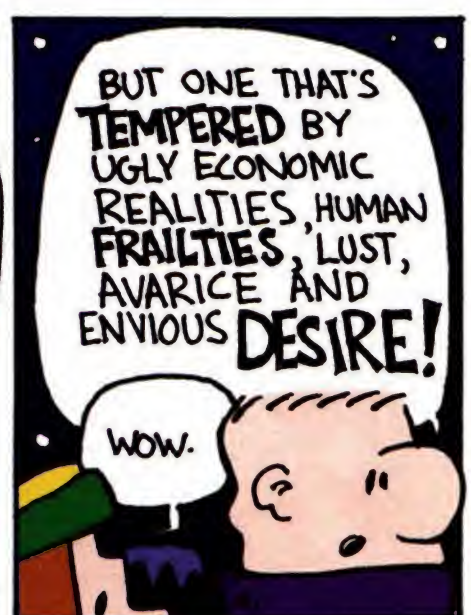
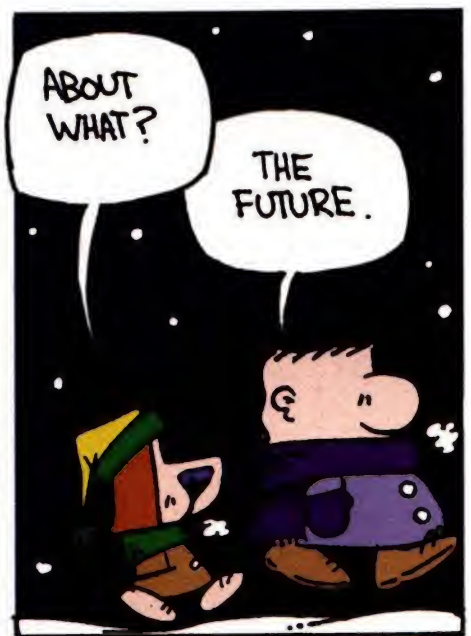
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Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

This month, the Sage looks at magic and other extraordinary powers in the AD&D® game, then takes a side trip into the universe of the ALTERNITY® game.

What races from the PLANESCAPE® setting (tieflings, githzerai, and so on) can become psionicists, and what are their maximum level limits?

They all can. Humans have unlimited advancement, and other races have an advancement limit of 10th level unless the psionics rules you're using list a higher one.

Does the 1st-level wizard spell *chill touch* work only once, or does the chance to chill an opponent last for as long as the spell's duration lasts?

Does the soul-trapping power of the demilich allow a saving throw to avoid the entrapment?

The caster can make one touch attack each round the *chill touch* spell lasts.

In the **PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers** book, there is a class restriction called limited magical item use. The character receives +5 character points for each category of barred magical item use. According to the book, the categories are: potions, oils, and scrolls; rings, rods, staves, and wands; miscellaneous magical items; and weapons and armor. I have

a player who feels he should receive +5 CPs for oils, +5 CPs for scrolls, +5 CPs for wands, +5 CPs for staves, and so on. I feel he should get +5 points for oils, scrolls, and potions; +5 points for rings, rods, staves, and wands; and so on. Please tell us who is correct.

You have read the text correctly. For purposes of this particular rule, there are only four categories of items. The character has to eschew all items in a category to get the +5 CPs. To be clear, the categories are:

- Potions (including elixirs), oils, and scrolls.
- Rings, rods, staves, and wands.
- Miscellaneous magical items.
- Weapons and armor.

In a recent game, our wizard wanted to use the 3rd-level wizard spell *item* to shrink a box containing several weapons. As it happened, the box was too big for the character to affect, so I didn't have to make a ruling. Assuming that the box wasn't too big for the character to affect, should it have worked? The description of the spell says only one item can be shrunk, and in this case the box contained several swords. However, the example in the description also says that a fire and its fuel can

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be successfully shrunk. It could be argued that a fire consists of several items. For my part, I would have decided not to allow the spell to work on the box of swords.

The DMs must decide what constitutes a "single item" in this context. I recommend that you allow the spell to affect a group of items only when they obviously form part of a larger whole. The spell should work on a pair of scissors or even a sword and its sheath, but not a box of swords.

Does the soul-trapping power of the demilich allow a saving throw to avoid the entrapment? Or perhaps to avoid the disintegration of the corpse? Is a saving throw allowed for the demilich's curse? What about the demilich's dust form? I know the dust form assumes the powers of a ghost upon absorbing 50 energy factors, but can it be destroyed after the transformation, or must the party face an invincible ghost?

Technically, the soul-trapping power works just like the first version of the *trap the soul* spell in the *Player's Handbook*. Any character within 10 yards can be the target, and a saving throw vs. spell applies. Unlike the spell, however, the afflicted character's body rots away if the saving throw fails.

I recommend that you impose a -2 saving throw penalty and that you do not allow any bonuses to the saving throw except Wisdom bonuses. In any case, magic resistance does not apply to

the soul-trapping power, as it is not a spell or a spell-like ability. Note that an *amulet of life protection* negates the soul-trapping power.

There is no saving throw against a demilich's curse.

A demilich's dust form is immune to attack. The demilich's foes must locate and destroy the skull to defeat the creature. Once the skull is destroyed, the dust form dissipates.

In the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual Volume 3, there's a creature called an amber dragon. This creature is supposed to be able to cast druid spells. The spell progression looks strange, however: It seems to allow 11th-level spells! How many spells of each type can this creature cast, and at what age can it cast druid spells?

An amber dragon casts wizard spells beginning at the hatchling stage (age category 1) and begins casting druid spells at the old stage (age category 8). The dragon's spell progression table should read:

Age Category	Wizard Spells/ Druid Spells
1	1
2	1 1
3	2 1 1
4	2 2 1 1
5	2 2 2 1 1
6	3 2 2 2 1 1
7	3 3 2 2 2 1 1
8	3 3 3 2 2 2 1/1
9	4 3 3 3 2 2 2/1
10	4 4 3 3 3 2 2/2 1
11	4 4 4 3 3 3 2/2 2 1
12	5 4 4 4 3 3 3/2 2 2 1

A sword of life stealing drains one level or Hit Die from the opponent on a natural 20. Does this include the +2 bonus of the sword? For example, if you rolled an 18, can you add the +2 bonus to drain a level? Also, the sword is supposed to give the wielder hit points from the opponent. Do you gain hit points only when you roll a natural 20, or whenever a successful hit occurs? How many hit points do you gain?

Whenever something requires a "natural 20," the number showing on the die must actually be a 20, not some

lower roll modified to a 20. In the case of a special weapon power such as this, the attack also must hit.

A *sword of life stealing* grants its wielder hit points only when the sword drains a level from an opponent. The wielder gains exactly as many hit points as the opponent loses to the level drain. For example, the sword wielder rolls a 20 and hits a 9th-level human wizard who has a Constitution score of 11 (and thus no bonus hit points from Constitution). The wizard suffers the damage a *sword* +2 normally inflicts (1d8 + 2 plus any additional damage bonuses the wielder might have from Strength or weapon skill). The wizard also becomes 8th-level and loses a 4-sided Hit Die. If the lost Hit Die is worth 3 hit points, then 3 hit points is

The weapon is used like a dagger, so the character must be proficient with the dagger to use it. To gain specialization bonuses, a character must be a dagger specialist.

The Earth, Air, Fire, and Water accessory for the DARK SUN® setting mentions "spirit of the land" advanced beings. Exactly how many Hit Dice would a 30th-level spirit of the land have?

The character gains 9d8 + 22 hit points for reaching 20th level. (Constitution bonuses apply to the 9d8.) By the time the character reaches 30th level as an advanced being, he or she gains 32d8 more hit points (with no Constitution adjustments).

Can golems (specifically stone golems) be affected by magic missile spells?

what the sword wielder gains. The amount of damage the opponent suffers from the blow is irrelevant; only the hit points lost to the level drain count. Note that hit points from the sword can never give the wielder more than maximum hit points. If the wielder in our example already was at maximum hit points, he or she would gain nothing.

Can golems (specifically stone golems) be affected by magic missile spells? I ask because the magic missile spell doesn't affect inanimate objects, and it's not clear to me whether a golem is an inanimate object. Once it starts attacking, it sure is "animate."

A stone golem is a creature, not an object, whether it is attacking or not. However, a stone golem is immune to most spells, including *magic missile*.

Does a halfling fighter specialized in the use of a short sword gain the specialization bonuses while using a dagger +2, longtooth (which lengthens to effectively become a short sword)? Would the halfling enjoy these specialization bonuses if he or she were specialized in the dagger?

I'm trying to use some old modules with the current AD&D rules. The demons are giving me trouble because I don't know what type I-VI demons are. Could you give me their modern names according to the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix?

Sure. The monsters the original AD&D game called demons are called tanar'ri in the AD&D 2nd edition game. The various types are as follows: type I, vroek; type II, hezrou; type III, glabrezu; type IV, nalfeshnee; type V, marilith; type VI, balor.

How does the Snillloc's major missile spell work? The spell's text says it works exactly the same as magic missile except that it can target only one creature. Then it goes on to tell how damage increases as the caster's level rises. The rest of spell description sounds as if only one missile is created. How many missiles does this spell produce?

One. The single missile the spell produces behaves just as a missile from a *magic missile* spell. As the caster's level goes up, the missile's damage potential goes up.

The rules for cyberspace in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Dataware* accessory seem to focus on characters using smart GIDs shadows. What about characters using dumb GIDs? Is it possible for a user with a dumb GID (and no cyberware) to make attacks or use programs such as a surge against a gridpilot, or to invoke programs specific to shadows, such as shadow weapon? Can such a character act like a shadow within the Grid? If so, are there any penalties associated with using a dumb GID?

A hero using a dumb GID cannot use a shadow or engage in shadow combat. A dumb GID does not allow the user to enter the Gridscape. Since the user isn't actually in the Grid, he or she neither enjoys the benefits nor suffers any detrimental effects from being there.

I was wondering how powerful the telepathy-datalink psionic skill can be. The skill description says that it can control or manipulate computers and cybernetic devices that require a computer to operate, but it says nothing about using the datalink skill to program software. Since the skill can be used to operate a computer and hack into computers, can it also program?

Datalink allows the user to interface with a computer without a physical connection. (In terms of current technology, the character is his or her own display, keyboard, and mouse.) Once the character has linked with the computer, the character can do anything with that computer that he or she could do with a physical connection, but datalink does not provide any

advantages beyond providing the interface. Note that a character using this power can enter the Gridscape (see previous question).

When constructing a supporting cast robot using the rules in Chapter 6 of *Dataware* book, do I add the cost for each of the robot's skills to the robot's total cost? If so, how much does a broad skill cost? How much for each rank in a specialty skill?

You don't pay per skill; you pay just for the processor required to support the robot's skills.

When I'm using the *Dataware* rules to build a robot hero, do I go by the Custom Robot Parts list, do I use Table D17, or do I use both?

You use both.

If I have a spaceship with photon sails and a planetary thruster, can I land the craft without damaging the sails?

The planetary thruster description does not specifically prohibit the unit's use with photon sails, so there's no reason to fear that the thruster will damage the sails. It's safe to assume the sails fold in for planetfall.

How many gravities can a robot withstand? Is it more or less than a human?

Robots have roughly human tolerance to high gravity. They do not become exhausted from high gravity, though their power can run out.

Can I use a fusion torch engine as a weapon? How much damage can it cause?

Does one receive a saving throw if a cleric casts a *heat metal* spell on one's nonmagical armor or weapons? If the wearer has magic resistance, does it apply to a *heat metal* spell?

A creature wearing or carrying nonmagical metal receives no saving throw against a *heat metal* spell. The target's magic resistance, if any, does apply if the spell is cast on metal the creature is wearing or carrying. Magic resistance does not apply if a *heat metal* spell is cast on unattended items that the creature subsequently picks up.

You could treat the plume from the engine as a matter torpedo attack. The plume can affect only ships in the same hex as the attacker (within 100 kilometers). The ship's pilot must make an Amazing level maneuver to point the blast at another ship. Avoiding the plume is an Ordinary action for the target ship.

The *ALIEN COMPENDIUM™* book includes a creature called the spikespore. The first form of the creature is a sphere 60 centimeters in diameter. What is the size and weight of the second (and more dangerous) form? Spikespores capture other creatures to implant them with spores, but do they also eat some of their prey? Finally, how do young spikespores revert to their first form, the spore state?

A spikespore's active form is about the size of a large human (or a small weren).

Spikespores probably do eat, consuming about as much as a human or small weren.

Spikespores enter a period of dormancy in which they assume spore form. It takes about 12 hours to form the outer shell.


Do heavy weapons require power cells the way charge weapons do? If so, what do the power cells cost, and how long do they last?

Most heavy weapons are not charge weapons and do not use power cells. The heavy charge machine gun needs a cell that costs \$500. It lasts for ten clips.

Does a *comprehend languages* spell enable the caster not only to read written languages based on letters but also to read symbol-based languages such as Ancient Egyptian or Mayan? Can the caster read languages like Old Hebrew, in which the vowels are left out?

Comprehend languages lets the user read "writing" in any form. It does not, however, decipher coded material, nor does it fill in characters that are missing. A piece of text with no vowels might take extra time or an Intelligence roll to figure out.

Is it possible to cast an *adamantite mace* spell (described in *Spells & Magic*) on a magical cudgel, mace, or staff?

Yes, but only the best bonus applies; don't add the bonus from the spell and the bonus from the item together. 

Skip reports that he has been subjected to several rhetorical adamantite cudgels after recently becoming embroiled in a local political debate.

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You Rule

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ProFiles



MARY KIRCHOFF

by Stephen Kenson

Although born and raised in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, the city that gave birth to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, Mary Kirchoff had no idea her career would become entwined with the games her classmates played in high school.

"I went to school with Ernie Gygax and a number of people who later worked for TSR," she says. "I was vaguely aware of the people who played things like the D&D® game at school. Then I went away to college and learned more about roleplaying games. I realized [they] were coming from my home town."

After graduating from Lawrence University with a B.A. in English, Mary traveled "until [she] was broke and had to get a job." She found it at TSR as editor of *POLYHEDRON® Newszine* in 1982, shortly after its second issue. She also did graphic design for *DRAGON® Magazine* and worked with Roger Moore on TSR's short-lived *ARES™* science-fiction magazine.

Mary wrote her first book, *Light on Quests Mountain*, for TSR's *ENDLESS QUEST®* series, and went on to write several other books in the collection. At the time, TSR's Book department was growing rapidly, producing *ENDLESS QUEST* books and launching a new series of books based on the *DRAGONLANCE®* setting. Mary resigned to write full time, supported by her boyfriend (now husband), TSR game editor and designer Steve Winter. Over the years, she has written six *DRAGONLANCE* novels: *Wanderlust*, *Flint the King*, *Kendermore*, and the *Defenders of Magic Trilogy*.

Three years later, Mary began editing freelance for TSR again, working on books like *The Art of the DRAGONLANCE Saga* and *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home*. She later rejoined the company as a full-time editor. "I was at the beginning of my first pregnancy. I decided I could use the maternity leave pay, and if I didn't like the job I could always quit. As it turned out, I loved the job."

Shortly after rejoining TSR, Kirchoff began looking for a new *FORGOTTEN REALMS®* book to follow Doug Niles' *Darkwalker on Moonshae*. "I went to the

slush pile and read the first 30 pages of a book called *Echoes of the Third Magic* by this guy named Bob Salvatore. The story really didn't fit what we were looking for, but there was something about the writing that grabbed me." TSR began working with Salvatore for what would become *The Crystal Shard*, his first novel. "I have a vivid memory," Kirchoff says, "of pushing back from the computer while editing the manuscript for *Crystal Shard*, thinking, 'Wow, that's a really great scene!'"

After a while, Mary was promoted to head of the Book department and found herself working with a staff of editors who shared a vision for directing a variety of writers to be their most creative in a shared-world environment. "Every book we published hit numerous bestseller lists—it was a golden time."

After five years writing *DRAGONLANCE* novels late at night while running the Book department during the day, she decided it was time to withdraw to spend more time with her children. Five years and four more novels later, Kirchoff returned as Executive Editor of a restructured book-publishing program. She now works full time with a new group of editors, living part time in a remodeled Victorian home in Wisconsin with her husband and two young sons, while spending the rest of her time in Seattle.

"I see myself as a kind of interface between the writing community and the publishing world," says Kirchoff. "I know the relationship between writer and editor has to be a collaborative one, not antagonistic. Both sides have unique perspectives."

For Kirchoff, much of what is currently happening in the Book department harkens back to the "golden time" of TSR's book publishing in the late 80s.

"We were so excited then because everything we did went really well," she says. "There was a cooperative spirit. Every day was a new challenge, and we met it. Now, once again, I have a really great department, with a commitment to its shared vision. We produce a lot of books with a staff of only eight people. There's a lot of excitement from all the changes that have happened over the past few years, and we're really looking forward to the future." 

Diplomat and visionary,

Mary Kirchoff helps steer the *Wizards of the Coast®* book department toward the future.

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- a) Angels b) the Dead c) City?! It's not a city, it's a Plane! d) Doors

2. IN PLANESCAPE: TORMENT, YOU PLAY AS...

- a) The Chosen One b) The Golden Child c) The Nameless One d) Brian Menze

3. THE LADY OF PAIN IS...

- a) A dominatrix b) A World Warrior c) Ruler of the Multiverse d) Ruler of Sigil

4. ONE OF THE CHARACTERS THAT CAN JOIN YOU ON YOUR QUEST IS...

- a) A 400 ft.-tall, grey, radioactive lizard b) A lawful good kender c) A puritan succubus
d) A ghost in the shell

5. "GRONK" IS...

- a) A strange, rhinoceros-like creature b) A password to get in the Anarchists' headquarters
c) A Baatezu term for "Get out of my sight, berk!"
d) The Githzerai's greatest leader's uncle

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Ten Second Prize Winners:

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To enter, mail the correct answers on a 4"x6" postcard with your name to: **Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ("Wizards") Attn: Torment Trivia Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. Or you can visit our web site at www.wizards.com/dragon**
NO PURCHASE REQUIRED. One entry per person. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), 1/4/00.

Winners will be selected by random drawing from all eligible entries 1/15/00. Wizards will select one (1) Grand Prize Winner. The Grand Prize Winner will receive CD ROM, *Forgotten Realms Archives Silver Addition*, *Baldur's Gate Gold Edition*, *Second Edition Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master Guide*, *Planescape Campaign Setting*, *Planescape Monstrous Compendium*, *D&D Boxed Set*. (Est. retail value \$350) Wizards will select (5) First Prize Winners. The First Prize Winners will receive *Forgotten Realms Archives Silver Addition*, *Baldur's Gate Gold Edition*, *Player's Handbook*, *DM Guide Book*, *D&D Boxed Set*. (Est. retail value \$100). Wizards will select (10) Second Prize Winners. The Second Prize Winners will receive *Forgotten Realms Archives*, *Baldur's Gate Gold Edition*. All other expenses and all taxes are responsibility of winner. The prizes are guaranteed to be awarded, and are not transferable, assignable or redeemable for cash.

The odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received. Void where prohibited or restricted by law. In order to receive any prize, entrant agrees to sign Wizards' affidavit of eligibility. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the affidavit and travel with the minor. Employees of Wizards and its respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

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For a Few Dragons More

By Johnny Wilson



One of the great joys of having *DRAGON*® Magazine surpass 250 issues is that there is such a wealth of information, adventures, articles, proposals, concepts, and just plain stuff available to add to your campaign. Of course, the great challenge is getting to that information. Even if you managed to collect all 250 issues (which would mean either that you started over twenty years ago or that you've spent a pretty penny), how could you possibly access all that information easily? Even if you managed to find the article you needed, are you really going to bring your mint-condition issue #39 with the anti-paladin article to the game table? You just know it's going to end up in the pizza.

In their continuing effort to make our gaming lives easier, the Wizards of the Coast® Electronic Division has produced the *DRAGON Magazine Archive*, 250 issues of *DRAGON Magazine* on a five CD-ROM set.

Now before I go any further, let me make something perfectly clear: When I say "250 issues of *DRAGON Magazine* on CD-ROM," I mean the entire issue exactly as it originally appeared on the newsstands. Everything—every article, every letter column, every adventure, every advertisement, the front cover, the back cover, everything. For some reason, this concept is difficult for some people to grasp. They keep expecting something was held back. People keep

TOLKIEN EFFORT

By searching all of the text for references to balrogs, we were able to build a list with 14 different references.

saying things like, "So it's just the articles, right?" Or, "But you're not going to include the art, right?" Or even, "Are you going to include the cartoons?" Just so there is no mistake when I say "the entire magazine," I do indeed mean *the entire magazine*.

Most people get pretty excited at that idea, but that is just the beginning. If we had just the magazines in an electronic format, we'd still have to dig the information out of an awful lot of files.

So the next task was to make the entire *Archive* searchable. The *Archive* compilers created a viewer with a search engine that can reach across all five CD-ROMs, so you can find every article ever written that contains any information on, for instance, the drow. That search can also be constrained by title and/or article text; if you want to know every issue that included an "Ecology of the..." article, you can search article titles for the word "ecology."

Once you have found the information you desire, you must overcome two problems: how to find the information easily when you need it for your game and how to transport it to your game. There are a variety of solutions to both problems. The first is the saved search function. After completing a number of searches, you might want to return to one of your earlier searches. If you

Most people won't want to make such a simplistic search as "drow" or "ecology," so the search engine supports a variety of search operations. You can search for any in a series of keywords or all. You can search for a phrase and you can search for two words near each other. You can even specify how many words apart constitutes "near." You can constrain your search not only by the title or text of an article but also by the CD, the year, or the issue. If you are interested in a more relaxed approach to acquiring information, you can browse the collection. The browse feature shows you the entire collection by year, issue, and article. By simply clicking your mouse, you can scan over the entire collection year by year, issue by issue, or article by article.

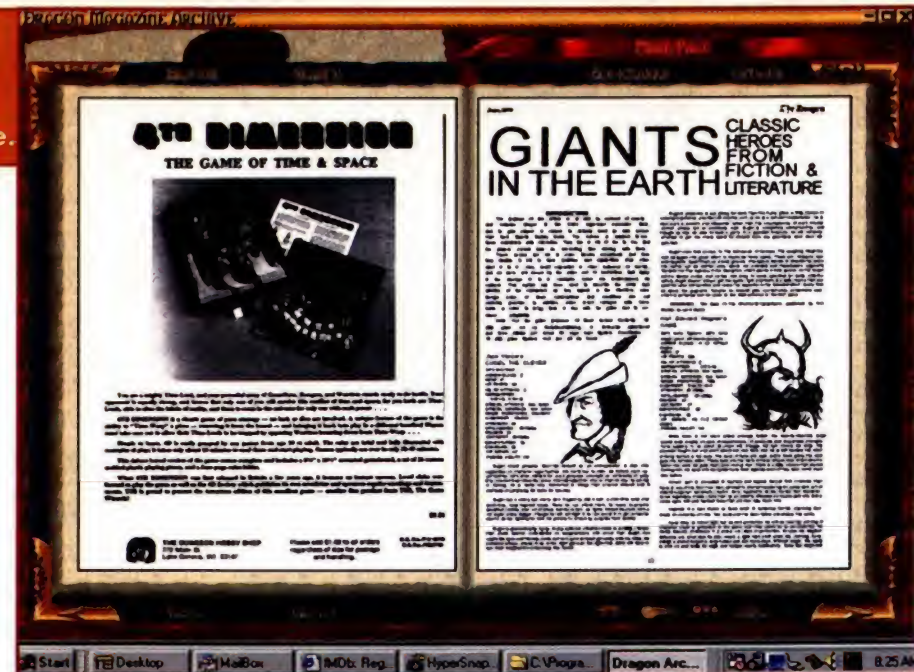


AD INFINITUM

Every page from the first 250 issues, including the ads, is replicated in the five CD archive.

have been doing complex searches ("drow" near "knight" constrained to titles in 1989–1994), you might have a tough time remembering exactly what parameters brought up each article. Fortunately, the *DRAGON Magazine Archive* can remember your searches and save them in a pull-down menu. You can even tell it how many searches to save. But if you want to save an article for a bit longer—like permanently—the *DRAGON Magazine Archive* also comes with a bookmarking feature.

You can save articles that you feel are important by bookmarking them and then organize your bookmarks by placing them in folders. For example, say you are creating an adventure that includes a lich, and you want to have handy every article ever written about liches. After you have completed your search, you can bookmark all the articles and place them in a folder called



The entire issues are exactly as they originally appeared on the newsstand!

"liches." That way you can keep them separate from your bookmarks on mummies. Even better, when your friend in another state decides he is interested in a lich campaign as well, you can save him the trouble of repeating all your research. Just export your bookmarks, attach them to an email, and send them to your friend. He can

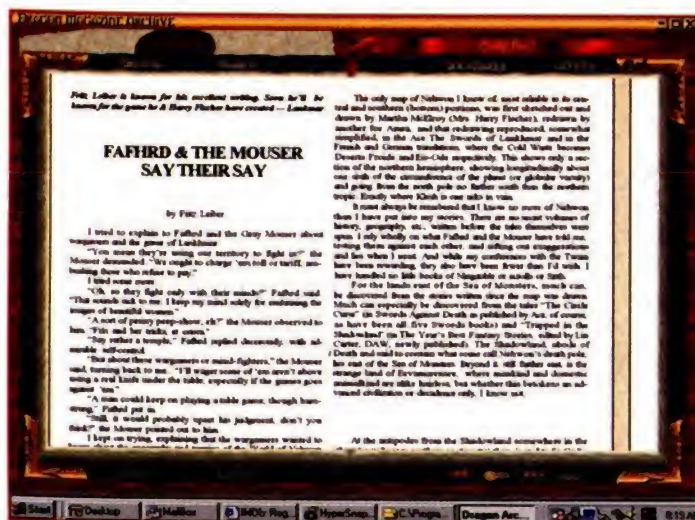
import them into his own *DRAGON Magazine Archive* and get started on his campaign.

Now all you have to do is figure out how to get all that information to your game. For those of you who have laptops, the entire *DRAGON Magazine*

every article in the *DRAGON Magazine Archive* is "live text." That means you can select the text, copy it, and paste it into a word processing program. Thus you can find all the articles about liches, copy and paste them all into a document, then trim out all the extraneous stuff, and add your own thoughts and ideas to come up with the last word in liches. This new document is now ready to be printed and taken to the gaming table.

On the other hand, maybe you do have a laptop or maybe you just believe in saving a tree. The *DRAGON Magazine Archive* has a number of viewing options to help you get full use on a computer monitor. You can fit pages by height or width. You can zoom close or zoom back. You can view the pages individually or two at a time as facing pages, which is handy for viewing some of the larger pieces of art.

Finally, as a special bonus, the *Archive* creators tossed in a little something that most people have never seen. *DRAGON Magazine* was originally published as *The Strategic Review*. There were only seven issues published before it changed name, and those seven issues are hard to get. Once you own a copy of the *DRAGON Magazine Archive*, however, you've got 'em. Them, and 250 issues of the best fantasy gaming magazine ever printed.



ACH DU LIEBER
Famous writers like fantasist Fritz Lieber have graced the pages of *Dragon Magazine* since the first issue. Now, you can read these classic pages without mortgaging your house.

GOING MOBILE

What stretched from Spokane to Charlotte, and didn't stop moving for nearly two months?



By Doug Monkey



Stan! runs a game for some of the visiting gamers.

Every Saturday from July to September, the TSR® Silver Anniversary Tour took over a book- or media-store in a different city and turned it into a mini game convention. Each stop centered around a display of covers and products from each of TSR's twenty-five years, ranging from 1974's *Empire of the Petal Throne* to this year's Origins Award winning AD&D® GREYHAWK® supplement, *The Adventure Begins*. The Tour featured signings and Q&A sessions with TSR designers and authors such as Jeff Grubb, Bill Slavicsek, R.A. Salvatore, Steve Miller, Margaret Weis, Bruce Cordell, Tracy Hickman, Sean K. Reynolds, Mel Odom, Thomas Reid, Jean Rabe, John Rateliff, and Stan!

But that wasn't all—each Tour stop also hosted RPGA® tournaments, demonstrations of the D&D® and ALTERNITY® intro

games, TSR Trivia contests, prize giveaways, and heaping tables full of free souvenir t-shirts, CD ROMs, buttons, posters, and dice bags.



**"You lookin' at me?"
Bob Salvatore signs his
latest book for hordes of
Drizzt fans.**

One never knew who might show up at a Silver Anniversary Tour stop.

Those who paid close attention might have noticed that the DM was actually RPGA Coordinator Scott Magner or D&D® Worlds Creative Director Stan! Often, the person handing out t-shirts was someone like TSR Brand Manager Cindi Rice or Sales Manager Brian Mitchell. Other times, local TSR luminaries showed up on their own free time to enjoy the spectacle.

"In Waterford, CT," Stan! reports, "we looked up during the Q&A and there was *Carnival* designer John Mangrum just standing in the crowd. He'd come all the way from upstate New York because he'd heard the Tour was that much fun."

The stores that hosted the events also went all-out, pulling in fans not only from their local area but from across the region. Thomas Reid says that at the College Station, TX stop, "we had people coming from as far away as Oklahoma and Louisiana, and it seemed like there were at least fifty or sixty people there all day."

According to TSR Marketing Director Jim Fallone, attendance steadily increased at each city the Tour visited.

"The Silver Anniversary Tour is part of a new philosophy we've been working on for a while now," says Fallone. "We want to give our writers the opportunity to interact with the fans in more intimate settings than the GEN CON® Game Fair and the other large conventions. We want to set up a real communication with the people who love our games."

So does this mean that there will be other tours in the coming years?

"That really depends on what the fans thought of the Silver Anniversary Tour," Fallone said. "If they ask for more, we will certainly look into the possibility of doing another tour."



**"I'm just happy to be here."
Game designer Sean Reynolds
models the latest in geek chic.**



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COUNTDOWN

Todd Lockwood and Sam Wood

When roleplaying R&D began work on the 3rd Edition game, they knew it would need a new look to go with the new rules. They turned to art director Jon Schindehette, who in turn tapped artists Todd Lockwood and Sam Wood for the daunting task of re-envisioning the D&D world.

When we say "daunting," we aren't kidding. As of late September, Todd and Sam have submitted about three hundred conceptual sketches for the characters alone. Fortunately, they are rarely asked to redesign the sketches they submit. When asked how often R&D wanted revisions, Jon reports that their response is simple: "Ninety-nine percent of the time they said, 'Oh, my God. That's great!'"

Who Are These Guys?

Todd and Sam are gamers as well as artists. Todd started playing way back in 1977. He's a big fan of high-level D&D adventures, but lately he's found time to play only during lunch-break playtests. Fortunately, working on the new look of the D&D game is a fine substitute. He says that working with Sam has been "like being in 3rd grade again with my buddies," encouraging each other's work by saying, "Oh, this would be cool!"

Sam "has a keen understanding of the game," says Todd, adding that Sam knows not only the D&D game but also the fantasy literature from which it was inspired.

Jon describes Sam more succinctly: "He's a total goob."

Classes

Creating the look of the D&D classes wasn't as simple as drawing one of each of the eleven classes in the 3rd Edition game. For each of them, Todd and Sam

designed one male, one female, and at least one nonhuman version.

"In every case," reports Todd, "Sam and I were seeking that fine line between the traditional and the new. We knew we wanted to divorce ourselves from historical accuracy without abandoning it so thoroughly that we lost that medieval feel."

Some of the changes might sound pretty subtle until you see the drawings. "With fighters," says Todd, "we made the armor more modular looking, articulated and flexible, and asymmetrical whenever possible."

"Wizards aren't relegated to robes anymore. Their dress is also functional, festooned with pockets and pouches. Clerics can have a look that varies widely, depending on the patron deity." With every class, the trick was to walk the line between tradition and innovation. "I believe that what we have created walks that line perfectly," declares Todd. "I'm very excited about it. It's edgy and tough, new and old."

Races

Just like the classes, the classic D&D races underwent a redesign. Todd's elves, for instance, look markedly different from half-elves with just a few small differences in physiognomy.

In other cases, the changes were reflected in clothing and equipment. "Dwarven armor has a look all its own, one that is functional but also very cool," says Todd. "We created a new armor type for elves which has a totally alien look."

On rare occasion, the artists' original conceptions didn't work for R&D. "Gnomes were the biggest compromise," says Todd, with only a hint of disappointment. The first designs were "too dark and creepy" for the game designers' tastes. With just a little finesse, however, a slightly new design made everyone happy."



"I like this guy a lot, mostly because of the cigar. I was musing on the fact that wizards from Gandalf on down seem to be depicted with pipes clenched in their teeth. Since we are about breaking molds, the cigar seemed like a natural."

-Todd Lockwood

TO THIRD EDITION

8

Reinvent the Look of the D&D® Game



"We knew going in that monks were a character class, not a race of people. We specifically avoided Asians for the monk drawings to make that point."

-Todd Lockwood

At other times, the artists were just stumped when presented with a new design. "Half-orcs were a problem," admits Todd, "until we stepped back to do orcs, first." Once Sam nailed the orc design, the half-orcs were easy. "We wanted to get away from pig-faced orcs," says Todd. "Sam fixed 'em."

Iconic Characters

In addition to sketches for classes and races, Todd and Sam have been designing a series of "iconic characters," figures who will appear consistently throughout the *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. These characters are essentially examples for the millions of new characters players will create soon after the launch of 3rd Edition.

Despite his own gaming background, Todd didn't feel the urge to include his own characters in the sketches. Instead, he found that the game designer's

descriptions of their PCs give him vivid images from which he extrapolated new visual conceptions.

Likewise, sometimes the innovations Todd and Sam worked into the characters and creatures inspired the game designers to alter the written design. With this creative give-and-take, the artists felt a great deal of freedom, the results of which speak for themselves.

The Big Picture

Throughout the design process, Todd always keeps one primary goal in mind: All the figures must be characters you'd want to play. You can play "not just chubby hobbits," for instance, "but rugged halfling rangers."

That doesn't mean these guys have no respect for the past. The trick is to "appeal to new players without alienating the veterans," says Jon.

Character designs are only the beginning for Sam and Todd. As of October 1999, they are just beginning to work seriously on monsters. "I'm looking forward to dragons," says Todd with obvious anticipation. Even after the monsters, the artists hope to define such elements as architecture, the environment, and common folk to create a "D&D Graphics Bible" from which other artists can draw inspiration.

Where does the new look of the D&D game fit into the game's history and tradition? "In the 1970s," says Todd, "other companies copied the D&D look. In the '80s, fantasy roleplaying design became more innovative. The task now is to remain faithful to the original spirit of the D&D game while innovating."

"In all cases we were looking to find the mean between historic medieval and something new and unseen." -Todd Lockwood



Artists Sam Wood, Todd Lockwood, and Jon Schindehette. Todd lets Jon know what he thinks of "constructive criticism."

It's this mission that promises to make the 3rd Edition game the most exciting game product of the year 2000, both for its rules and its fantastic artwork. For more on the development of the art and rules of 3rd Edition, keep an eye on these pages as the Countdown continues ...



THE RACES ARE ALIGNING.
THE ARMIES ARE GATHERING.
THE APOCALYPSE IS APPROACHING.

AND PEACE IS CURLED UP IN THE FETAL POSITION, WHIMPERING.

"IT LOOKS LIKE TURN-BASED STRATEGY GAMING IS ABOUT TO GET A SHOT IN THE ARM. IT WILL HELP SOLIDIFY AND STRENGTHEN THE GENRE." - IGNPC.COM

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Over 100 different fighting units and more than 50 unique heroes that grow in experience and power.



The wise ones have seen an omen of doom in the form of a star in the night sky. The age of peace has officially been bludgeoned to death. The elfin court lies in ruin, and two factions have emerged. Battle flags have been raised, and silence has enveloped the land. This is the calm before the storm. You cannot choose to avoid the apocalyptic battle that looms on the horizon. Hatred and the need for revenge have a very long shelf life.



Make critical decisions involving siege units, heroes, captured towns, magic spells, immunities, and stealth.



Battle your way through vast open areas, breach the outer wall in city sieges and explore dark dungeons.



Feathered Friends and Foes



by James Wyatt
illustrated by Terese Nielsen

Often confused with lycanthropes and other shapeshifters, swanmays are human women whose magical tokens allow them to shapechange to swan form. Recent discoveries have revealed four similar groups that use magical tokens to assume avian form. These societies provide new player character or nonplayer character races, following the guidelines for humanoid characters in *The Complete Book of Humanoids*.

Black Swanmay

Background. Like their white-plumed sisters, black swanmays form a sorority of shapechanging warriors and priests. Devoted to the ethos of law and good, black swanmays are female paladins, clerics, and crusaders who transform into large black swans with the help of a magical token.

As with ordinary swanmays, equipment carried by a black swanmay does not transform with her into swan form. Their tokens are similar to those of other swanmays—a necklace with a black feather, a signet ring, or a cloak of feathers, for example—but tend to feature lawful good holy symbols as well as feathers in their imagery and composition.

Languages. Common, Lammasu, Ki-rin.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Although they live in wild wetlands and forests, black swanmays are equally comfortable when in urban surroundings. They travel wherever the fight against evil leads them and often ally with knightly orders, lammasu, ki-rin, or even archons. They strive to keep their powers and identities hidden, and the creeds and practices of their sorority are well-kept secrets.

Special Advantages. In swan form, a black swanmay can be hit only by +1 weapons or better. They also gain magic resistance of 2% per level and fly at a rate of 21 (maneuverability class D) in swan form. They have no unusual abilities in human form, except for their transformation ability.

Special Disadvantages. If a black swanmay loses her magical token, she cannot change shape again until she recovers it. If the token is destroyed, the black swanmay must undergo a grueling quest to replace it.

If a black swanmay commits a chaotic or evil act, her sisters might strip her of her magical token (in addition to any

punishment from her deity and loss of class abilities). Once she has atoned for her misdeed, she may undertake a quest to replace her token. If a black swanmay paladin ever falls from grace irrevocably, she can never regain her transformation ability and remains a normal human as well as a normal fighter.

Monstrous Traits. Transformation ability.

Superstitions. Black swanmays see greater forces at work in any act of evil and sometimes react with unwarranted fear if they sense the hand of an evil power or fiend at work in the world.

Weapon Proficiencies: Broadsword, Dagger, Longbow, Longsword, Shortbow, Short Sword; others permitted by priest class.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Alertness, Animal Handling, Animal Lore, Animal Noise, Bowyer/Fletcher, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fire-Building, Fishing, Hiding, Hunting, Religion, Set Snares, Survival (Forest, Wetlands), Swimming, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Available Kits: (Warrior) tribal defender; (Priest) oracle, wandering mystic. Black swanmay paladins have all the powers and restrictions of human paladins; they do not use the saurian paladin kit described in *The Complete Book of Humanoids*.

Average Height and Weight: Height: $59 + 2d10$; Weight: $100 + 6d10$.

Age: Starting Age: $18 + 1d12$. Maximum Age Range: $90 + 2d20$. Average Maximum Age: 100. Middle Age: 45 years, Old Age: 60 years, Venerable: 90 years.

Laridian

Background. While swanmays (and black swanmays) are best described as a sorority, laridians are more like a guild—a loose affiliation of both male and female human thieves with the magical ability to transform into the shape of a large seagull. Found primarily in coastal

Black Swanmay

Ability Score Adjustments. Black swanmays receive a +1 bonus to their Charisma scores and suffer a -1 penalty to Constitution scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Min.	Max.
Strength	10/12	18
Dexterity	9/10	18
Constitution	9/12	17
Intelligence	12/12	18
Wisdom	12/13	18
Charisma	12/17	19

The minimum score listed before the slash is for clerics or crusaders; the number after the slash is for paladins. (The crusader class is fully detailed in the *Faiths & Avatars* accessory, page 184.)

Class Restrictions

Warrior	
Paladin	14
Priest	
Cleric	12
Crusader	12

Hit Dice. PC black swanmays receive Hit Dice by class.

Alignment. Black swanmays must be lawful good.

Natural Armor Class. Human form 10; swan form 6.

Base Movement Rate. Human form 12; swan form 3, fly 21 (D).

cities, laridians around the world pay tribute to a single guildmaster to whom they owe their magical powers. The laridian guild is replete with intrigue and backbiting, like most thieves' guilds, and laridians squabble as much as seagulls do.

Like swanmays, laridians effect their transformation through the use of a magical token, which becomes part of the gull when the thief changes shape. Unlike swanmays, however, laridians can change their equipment—as much as they can carry without being encumbered—into gull form with them, letting them make a quick getaway with all their loot.

The laridians recruit thieves with excellent potential for their secretive guild. They look for thieves with quick wits, and they approach only thieves who have accomplished heists worthy of

Laridian

Ability Score Adjustments. Laridians gain a +1 bonus to their Dexterity scores and suffer a -1 penalty to their Wisdom scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Min.	Max.
Strength	9	18
Dexterity	14	19
Constitution	12	18
Intelligence	13	18
Wisdom	8	17
Charisma	9	18

Class Restrictions

Rogue	
Thief	14

Hit Dice. PC laridians receive Hit Dice by class.

Alignment. Laridians can be any alignment but lawful good.

Natural Armor Class. 10 in human form; 7 in gull form.

Base Movement Rate. 12 in human form; 3, fly 24 (C) in gull form.

note. Crimes outrageous or spectacular enough to capture the attention of an entire city warrant an invitation into this exclusive group. Laridians seek out only the best of the best.

Laridians usually dwell in large human cities, away from others of their kind. Each cell, or smaller segment of the huge laridian guild, meets occasionally in a large port city.

Languages. Common, Thieves' Cant.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Many so-called thieves are adventurers with a variety of skills, but laridians live up to their name as thieves. They are larcenous, striving to outdo one another in thefts of incredible audacity. While some thieves prefer to skulk in the shadows, laridians are prone to loud boasting—though without necessarily revealing their identities. Many laridians have special signatures that they leave behind at the scene of a crime, such as a red scarf or a white glove. Others tempt fate by proclaiming loudly in a nearby tavern how they broke into the royal treasury or escaped from the city dungeon, then fleeing in gull form before the watch arrives.

Laridians keep the true nature of their guild completely secret. Each knows well the penalty for revealing too much, and none wants to suffer it.

Special Advantages. In gull form, laridians can be harmed only by magical weapons and gain magic resistance of 1½% per level (rounded down). They can fly at a rate of 24 (maneuverability class C) in gull form.

In human form, laridians are exceptional thieves. They gain 10 extra percentage points to spend on thieving skills at 1st level and 5 extra points at each additional level.

Special Disadvantages. Without a magical token, a laridian cannot change shape. If the token is destroyed, the laridian must appeal to the guildmaster for a new one. The guildmaster grants this appeal only if the laridian has been an exemplary member of the guild and completes another monumental heist, turning all profits over to the guild.

Monstrous Traits. Transformation ability.

Superstitions. Laridians constantly look for omens that portend the success or failure of their next venture. They see these signs anywhere—in the weather, the flight of birds, particular words, dreams, stumbling, and so on.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any allowed to thieves.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Alertness, Animal Noise, Appraising, Begging, Crowd Working, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Disguise, Drinking, Eating, Fast-talking, Forgery, Fortune Telling, Gaming, Hiding, Information Gathering, Looting, Observation, Reading Lips, Rope Use, Seamanship, Set Snares, Swimming, Tightrope Walking, Tumbling, Ventriloquism, Voice Mimicry.

Available Kits: (Rogue) tramp, shadow.

Average Height and Weight: Height: 60/59 + 2d10; Weight: 140/100 + 6d10.

Age: Starting Age: 15 + 1d12. Maximum Age Range: 90 + 2d20. Average Maximum Age: 100. Middle Age: 45 years, Old Age: 60 years, Venerable: 90 years.

Red Falcon

Background. The red falcons are an evil order of fighters and priests with the ability to transform into birds of prey. They are marked in human form by an angry

Laridians A magical thieves' guild



red scar on their faces or hands, but otherwise they appear to be normal humans. They change shape with the help of a magical blade—usually a dagger or knife, but sometimes a sword—that becomes talons when the red falcon assumes bird form. As with swanmays, any other gear the red falcon is carrying during the transformation is left behind.

Like swanmays, red falcons are highly selective in choosing new members for their order, generally electing only men and women who have performed some great favor for a red falcon or, occasionally, for the order as a whole.

Red falcons build small hamlets of crude cabins in dark woodlands and rocky hilltops. They are the sworn enemies of good sylvan races such as treants, unicorns, and swanmays. They sometimes befriend evil woodland creatures, including humanoids such as hobgoblins and bugbears, as well as more exotic creatures like quicklings, unseelie faeries, and green dragons.

Languages. Common, Bugbear, Hobgoblin.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Red falcons are evil forces of nature, devoted to a twisted vision of the natural world. In the red falcon view of paradise, forests become gloomy, dangerous places overrun with giant spiders and hangman trees, while cities lie in crumbling ruins, torn down by strangling vines. Thus they find themselves opposed both to humans and others who despoil the natural world, and to the good sylvan races who seek to preserve it in its pristine state. Some druids, like those of the mysterious Shadow Circle (described in *The Complete Druid's Handbook*), see red falcons and their allies as a necessary counterbalance to the good protectors of nature, and sometimes cooperate with them.

Red falcons are secretive about their true nature and their order, like others of their kind. They do not hesitate, however, to assume falcon form to escape a fight, even if it means abandoning valuable equipment.

Special Advantages. In falcon form, red falcons can fly at a movement rate of 36 (maneuverability class B). They can be harmed only by weapons of +1 or better enchantment, and they gain a magic resistance of 2% per level. They can also attack with their sharp beaks and talons,

inflicting 1–2/1–2/1–3 points of damage. These benefits do not apply in human form.

Red falcon clerics can become proficient in any sword, dagger, or knife.

Special Disadvantages. If a red falcon loses his or her enchanted blade, the character cannot change shape again until the weapon is recovered. If the blade is destroyed, the red falcon must undergo a grueling quest to replace it.

Monstrous Traits. Transformation ability.

Superstitions. Red falcons see signs and omens in nature, particularly its more violent manifestations—storms, floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any Sword, Dagger, Knife.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Alertness, Animal Handling, Animal Lore, Animal Noise, Blind-fighting, Close-quarter Fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fire-building, Fishing, Hiding, Hunting, Intimidation, Looting, Natural Fighting, Set Snares, Survival (forests, hills, mountains), Swimming, Tracking, Weather Sense, Wild Fighting.

Available Kits: (Warrior) tribal defender, sellsword; (Priest) oracle, wandering mystic. Red falcon priests serve evil deities of the wilderness, such as Malar in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting or the Queen of Air and Darkness (from *Monster Mythology*).

Average Height and Weight: Height: 62/60 + 2d10; Weight: 150/110 + 6d10.

Age: Starting Age: 15 + 1d12. Maximum Age Range: 90 + 2d20. Average Maximum Age: 100. Middle Age: 45 years, Old Age: 60 years, Venerable: 90 years.

Thebestyn

Background. A religious order of scholars devoted to the Egyptian god Thoth, thebestyns are human wizards with the ability to transform into ibises. They are otherwise normal humans, but each carries an ankh—the Egyptian symbol of life—decorated with Thoth's name and feathers from an ibis. This symbol, which radiates Alteration magic, facilitates the thebestyn's transformation, and the thebestyn cannot change shape without it. It becomes part of the ibis' plumage when a thebestyn assumes bird form, remaining partly visible as an ankh-shaped white spot on the bird's breast.

Red Falcon

Ability Score Adjustments. Red Falcons gain a +1 bonus to their Strength scores and suffer a –1 penalty to their Dexterity scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Min.	Max.
Strength	12/14	19
Dexterity	9/9	17
Constitution	10/12	18
Intelligence	12/10	18
Wisdom	12/10	18
Charisma	12/9	18

The minimum score listed before the slash is for clerics or crusaders; the number after the slash is for fighters. (The crusader class is fully detailed in the *Faiths & Avatars* accessory, page 184.)

Class Restrictions

Warrior	
Fighter	14
Priest	
Cleric	12
Crusader	12

Hit Dice. Red falcons receive hit dice by class.

Alignment. Red falcons must be evil in alignment.

Natural Armor Class. 10 in human form; 5 in falcon form.

Base Movement Rate. 12 in human form; 1, fly 36 (B) in falcon form.

Other equipment the thebestyn carries remains unchanged through the transformation.

The association of thebestyns is open only to wizards devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Scholars and historians who make important discoveries are sometimes approached by a thebestyn and invited to join the association, but only if the wizard shows an inclination to use the knowledge unselfishly and share it freely. Other wizards seek out the thebestyns and apply for membership in the association, but only the finest scholars are accepted.

Groups of thebestyns frequently work together to maintain libraries or universities, dwelling apart from human society without making their knowledge inaccessible. These thebestyn institutions are incredible storehouses of wisdom and information and are freely accessible to all.

Languages. Common, Ancient Egyptian, any written language.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Hungry for knowledge, thebestyns are completely devoted to specific historical or scientific fields of study. While many wizards are bookish, thebestyns are obsessive about their pursuit of lore. They are incensed both by those who claim there are "secrets we were not meant to know" and by scholars who seek to keep their discoveries secret.

Despite their fervent belief in open exchange of information, thebestyns keep their existence, true nature, and association secret.

Special Advantages. In ibis form, thebestyns can fly at a movement rate of 18 (maneuverability class D). In both human and bird form, thebestyns have magic resistance of 2% per level. This ability in no way interferes with the thebestyn's own spellcasting.

A thebestyn character may choose one field of study from those listed on table 61 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. The character is considered a sage with knowledge in that area and might know the answer to any question that

falls within this specialty, at the DM's discretion.

Special Disadvantages. If a thebestyn loses his or her enchanted ankh, the character cannot change shape again until it is recovered. If the ankh is destroyed, the thebestyn must begin the process of constructing another one—a tiresome ordeal requiring concentrated study, the acquisition of rare metals, and skilled craftsmanship. Replacing the ankh costs 500 gp per character level and requires 2 months of work, minus 1 day per Intelligence point of the character. A thebestyn cannot pay another to craft the ankh, for only the grace of Thoth infuses the item with its transformative power.

Devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, thebestyns can never learn any weapon proficiency. They can, however, spend weapon proficiency slots on nonweapon proficiencies instead.

Monstrous Traits. Transformation ability.

Superstitions. Thebestyns are superstitious in their approach to ancient tomes and scrolls. They fear monsters that affect the mind, particularly mind flayers.

Weapon Proficiencies: None.

Thebestyns Wizards devoted to knowledge



Thebestyn

Ability Score Adjustments. The mysterious Thebestyns are intelligent and wise. They gain a +1 bonus to their Intelligence and Wisdom scores but suffer a -1 penalty to their Strength and Constitution scores.

Ability Score Range

Ability	Min.	Max.
Strength	3	17
Dexterity	9	18
Constitution	3	17
Intelligence	14	19
Wisdom	16	19
Charisma	3	18

Class Restrictions

Wizard

Mage	14
Diviner	16

Hit Dice. PC thebestyns receive Hit Dice by class.

Alignment. Thebestyns must be at least partially neutral—neutral good, lawful neutral, chaotic neutral, neutral evil, or true neutral.

Natural Armor Class. 10 in human form; 8 in ibis form.

Base Movement Rate. 12 in human form; 6, fly 18 (D) in ibis form.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient History, Astrology, Engineering, Etiquette, Gem Cutting, Heraldry, Herbalism, Languages (Modern or Ancient), Navigation, Observation, Poetry, Reading/Writing, Religion, Spellcraft. Also (from *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Spells & Magic*): Alchemy, Anatomy, Arcanology, Bookbinding, Concentration, Papermaking, Research, Scribe. (All thebestyns have the Sage Knowledge proficiency, as described above.)

Available Kits: (Wizard) humanoid scholar.

Average Height and Weight: Height: 60/59 + 2d10; Weight: 140/100 + 6d10.

Age: Starting Age: 25 + 1d12. Maximum Age Range: 90 + 2d20. Average Maximum Age: 100. Middle Age: 45 years, Old Age: 60 years, Venerable: 90 years.

James's brothers love to remind him that, as a small child, he used to pretend he was a bird.

Shapechangers

PC Portraits



by Jim Crabtree

"I've been involved in roleplaying games since high school," says Jim Crabtree. "One of the most enjoyable aspects of the game to me has always been creating images to flesh out my characters, because I have no character myself. I've always had fun drawing people and creatures, so there ya go."



HUMANIMALS

by Johnathan M. Richards illustrated by Eric Petersen

The Kara-Tur setting is home
to two dozen kinds of hengeyokai...

...animals who can
transform into humans.

Each of the twelve new types (carp, cat, crab, crane, dog, drake, fox, hare, monkey, raccoon dog, rat, and sparrow) can assume three different forms: their specific animal form, human form, and an intermediate bipedal form combining traits of the other two.

Because even the AD&D® world contains myriad forms of animal, here are twelve more hengeyokai: the badger, dolphin, falcon, frog, lizard, lynx, octopus, otter, owl, panda, turtle, and weasel hengeyokai. While they fit naturally into an Oriental campaign, they can fit well into any AD&D campaign. With spelljamming vessels, gateways to other planes of existence, wild magic effects, and simple wanderlust, there's nothing to stop a hengeyokai from exploring other parts of its world—or even other worlds.

Common Hengeyokai Traits

All hengeyokai have several traits in common. They all have the ability to change shape naturally. Although similar in many respects to lycanthropes, hengeyokai are not affected by the phases of the moon, nor are they affected only by silver or magical weapons. They cannot transmit their abilities to others, nor does their shapeshifting heal them.

The hengeyokai's ability to change forms is limited by level. One shift in form per day per level is allowed; thus, a 3rd-level hengeyokai can change form three times per day. Changing form takes 1 complete round, during which time the hengeyokai can do nothing else.

Unlike magical shapeshifting, the hengeyokai's transformation does not allow the creature's armor and equipment to change form with the body. This difference distinguishes the hengeyokai ability from nearly all other forms of magical polymorphing. Consider the case of a wizard who casts *polymorph self* to change into a wren and fly across a wide river. Upon reaching the other side and cancelling the spell, the wizard returns to his or her normal form and has all of the equipment he or she was carrying before. A sparrow hengeyokai who takes animal form to cross that same river leaves all possessions behind. If the hengeyokai takes human form on the far side of the river, he or she stands naked and weaponless. A hengeyokai usually chooses to hide his or her possessions before assuming animal form or to leave them in the care of a trusted friend—this is especially true of wu jen and wizard hengeyokai, who might otherwise lose their precious spellbooks, without which they lose a great deal of their power.

In an Oriental setting, hengeyokai characters can choose to be shukenja, kensai, bushi, or wu jen. The wu jen has been updated for the 2nd Edition in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*, and an alternate version appears in "Campaign Classics: The Wu Jen," by Dave "Zeb" Cook, in *DRAGON* Magazine #229. The updated shukenja, kensai, and bushi appear in "The Other Orientals," by Tom Griffith, in *DRAGON* Magazine #189. If your campaign doesn't include these sub-classes and kits, hengeyokai can

Table 1: Hengeyokai Subraces

Subrace	Align.	Damage	AC	Movement	Modifications
Badger	Any evil	1-3	4	6, burrow 3	+1 Str, -1 Cha
Dolphin	Any good	2-8	5	swim 30	+1 Int, -1 Wis
Falcon	Any good	1-3	5	1, fly 36 (B)	+1 Str, -1 Con
Frog	Any	Nil	9	3, hop 6, swim 9	+1 Dex, -1 Con
Lizard	Any	1-2	7	9	+1 Dex, -1 Wis
Lynx	Any evil	1-3	6	12	+1 Int, -1 Cha
Octopus	Any evil	1-3	9	swim 9	+2 Dex, -2 Cha
Otter	Any chaotic	1-2	5	12, swim 18	+1 Dex, -1 Wis
Owl	Any good	1-2	5	1, fly 27 (D)	+2 Wis, -2 Con
Panda	Any good	2-5	7	12	+1 Cha, -1 Dex
Turtle	Any	1	7	1, swim 3	+2 Con, -2 Dex
Weasel	Any evil	1-2	6	15	+1 Int, -1 Cha

Alignment requirements apply to hengeyokai in all three forms.

Damage pertains strictly to hengeyokai in animal form. The listing shows the amount of damage the creatures can inflict with natural weapons.

Armor Class (AC) applies to animal form only.

Movement indicates hengeyokai's movement rate(s) while in animal form.

Modifications are the changes to the hengeyokai's ability scores. While these modifications can lower the ability scores below the racial minimums, they cannot raise them above the maximums.

Table 2: Hengeyokai Abilities

Ability	Animal Form	Bipedal Form	Human Form
Infravision	120 feet	120 feet	None
Speak with Animals	yes	yes	no
Speak Hengeyokai*	yes	yes	yes
Speak Human Tongue	no	yes	yes
Use Weapons/			
Armor/Equipment	no	yes	yes
Cast Spells**	no	yes	yes
Movement Rate	Per Table 1	12	12
% of Hit Points	50% (round up)	100%	100%

*All hengeyokai speak the same racial language, regardless of subrace.

**Assuming the hengeyokai is a member of a character class that uses spells

become members of the following classes: cleric, druid, or a priest of a specific mythoi; fighter or ranger; thief; or mage or specialist wizard.

Upon reaching 7th level, hengeyokai druids do not gain the ability to shapechange into other animals; rather, the "three times a day" limit is added to their own shapechanging abilities. Thus a 7th-level frog hengeyokai druid could change between animal, bipedal, and human forms ten times a day instead of its usual seven. Hengeyokai wizards can

also opt to be elementalists (as described in the *Tome of Magic*). In addition, some of the wu jen rules divide spells into "elemental" schools; hengeyokai wu jen using these rules often choose the element most closely associated with their animal forms.

Table 1 lists the alignment restrictions and special abilities of each of the new hengeyokai subraces.

Table 2 shows the various common abilities of all hengeyokai in their three forms.



While they prefer their animal form, dolphin hengeyokai sometimes find a pair of hands useful.

Badger Hengeyokai

In animal form, badger hengeyokai are virtually indistinguishable from ordinary badgers. They stand low to the ground on short, stubby legs equipped with powerful claws, allowing them to burrow quickly into the earth. Badger hengeyokai are as bad-tempered as their namesake, striking out at any threat that comes near, inflicting 1–3 points of damage with each strike.

Badger hengeyokai are carnivorous in all three forms, preferring a diet of small rodents and other burrowing creatures. They have a musky smell, the product of scent glands in their abdomens. This musk is often enough to warn potential enemies away from the creatures' underground dens.

The badger hengeyokai bipedal form is that of an upright badger, with some differences. The limbs are proportionally longer than they are in the animal form, although still relatively short and stumpy compared to human proportions. The badger's curved digging claws are not present in the bipedal form, forcing the badger hengeyokai to use weapons.

In its human form, the badger hengeyokai's distinguishing characteristic is the stripe of light color running through its hair. Badger hengeyokai tend to have dark hair in human form—dark brown, or occasionally black—

with a single streak of white that stands out in contrast. The badger hengeyokai can subsist on a standard human diet while in human form but still prefers to eat raw meat. Of all hengeyokai sub-races, badger hengeyokai care the least about whether anyone knows their true nature, and they often walk around with a chip on their shoulder, ready to start a fight at the smallest opportunity.

Because of their evil, bullying nature, badger hengeyokai cannot become shukenja, rangers, or druids. They seldom have the self-control necessary to devote themselves to the rigors of the kensai way of life and usually end up as bushi or common fighters. The few who learn the ways of magic become wu jen or occasionally necromancers. Those who become elementalists invariably specialize in earth magic.

Dolphin Hengeyokai

The dolphin hengeyokai is limited in that its animal form is nearly helpless when out of water. As a dolphin, it swims at Movement 30; on land, its movement is reduced to 1 by undulating its body like an inchworm, and this motion tires the creature in as many minutes as twice his or her Constitution score.

In dolphin form, these hengeyokai use echolocation to detect objects around them, even at night or in murky water. A

dolphin hengeyokai spends most of the time in this form, swimming as part of a dolphin pod, and often serving as pod leader. These creatures are helpful to humans and demihumans, and there are many cases of dolphins rescuing people who have fallen overboard in sea accidents. However, the dolphin is considered a food animal in many Oriental cultures, and they are often hunted as such.

Remember that dolphins are sea mammals, not fish. They spend much of their time underwater but must resurface to breathe. Both dolphins and dolphin hengeyokai have blowholes on the top of their heads through which they breathe. They need only 2 or 3 hours of sleep per day in animal form and have the uncanny ability to sleep with one eye open, keeping somewhat aware of their surroundings even as they sleep.

Dolphin hengeyokai are carnivorous, living off fish. This trait carries over to their other forms, although in human form they can eat vegetables. (Dolphin hengeyokai prefer not to do so unless necessary, however.)

In bipedal form, dolphin hengeyokai lose their flippers and form humanoid arms and hands instead. They also develop humanoid legs, enabling them to walk on land. However, their bodies are essentially unchanged otherwise, forcing them to stoop to face forward. Dolphin hengeyokai use this bipedal form most often to climb out of the water and onto seagoing vessels. While in bipedal form, they still breathe through their blowholes and can swim, although less like dolphins and more like humans.

In human form, dolphin hengeyokai breathe through their noses and mouths, but the characteristic blowholes are still present, if not functional. For this reason, dolphin hengeyokai wishing to disguise their heritage while in human form wear their hair long, keeping their vestigial blowholes hidden from view.

Dolphin hengeyokai who wish to become elementalists can study any of the elements except fire; nearly all dolphin hengeyokai elementalists specialize in water magic. If they choose to become normal mages, they can use fire-based spells (such as *fireball* or *burning hands*) without penalty; they however, cannot

become fire elementalists. Dolphin hengeyokai make excellent shukenja and rangers. (*The Complete Ranger's Handbook* has details on the sea ranger character kit, which is most appropriate for dolphin hengeyokai.)

Falcon Hengeyokai

Falcon hengeyokai in their animal form are among the swiftest birds, able to reach speeds over 200 miles per hour when swooping down on prey (gaining a +2 bonus to the attack roll in the process). As falcons, the hengeyokai eat other birds, small rodents, and insects and make their nests high in the mountains or cliffs, where they are relatively safe from harm. They fight to the death to protect their families, especially their eggs or newborn chicks.

Coloration of falcon hengeyokai feathers while in animal or bipedal form is usually brown, but they can also be gray, golden, or nearly black depending upon species. Falcon hengeyokai have excellent vision in each of their three forms.

Falcon hengeyokai in their bipedal form strongly resemble kenku (see the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome), and they are often mistaken for those creatures. While in bipedal form, falcon hengeyokai grow arms ending in talon-like hands, but these claws are not sharp enough to inflict damage. Their wings are still present, but they are not proportional to the size of their humanoid body and cannot be used for flight. The rest of the body is falconlike, including the tail feathers, which are still present.

In human form, falcon hengeyokai are often recognized by their sharp noses and piercing eyes. These creatures are known for honesty and loyalty, and they are often sought by important figures to serve as bodyguards. The path of the ranger is also frequently traveled by falcon hengeyokai, as well as that of the shukenja.

Falcon hengeyokai who become elementalists invariably concentrate on air magic, although they are not prohibited from choosing any of the other three elements as their focus of study.

Frog Hengeyokai

Frog hengeyokai are amphibious in all but human form, able to breathe air or water with equal ease. In animal form

they look like normal frogs, although there are many frog species. The majority are grayish green or brown, but the many tropical species include creatures with skin of bright red, yellow, orange, or deep black, often with colorful spots or stripes of contrasting hues. In most species, the underbelly is a lighter color or shade than the rest of the body.

In animal form, frog hengeyokai have the sticky tongues of normal frogs, connected at the front of the mouth instead of at the back, the better to capture prey such as insects. The frog hengeyokai is one of the few types unable to inflict damage in its animal form.

As frogs, most of these hengeyokai secrete a moist, toxic substance that most predators find irritating. This mild poison encourages the predator to seek its prey elsewhere, but it isn't dangerous enough to inflict damage.

Frog hengeyokai have four toes on each front leg and five on each rear leg when in animal and bipedal forms. The toes might be webbed, depending on the species of frog and whether it spends most of its time in the water or on land.

Frog hengeyokai have relatively good hearing and excellent eyesight, with great peripheral vision and the ability to detect the slightest movement, although they have a hard time focusing on motionless objects. The animal and bipedal forms have no external ear, merely a flat, round area on each side of the head.

All frog hengeyokai are excellent swimmers while in animal form. They can also leap at a Movement Rate of 6.

In bipedal form, frog hengeyokai look much like slaadi (see the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*) and are often mistaken for those creatures. The hengeyokai's frog-like body stands upright, and their four-fingered arms are capable of intricate movement. The legs are more humanoid, preventing the hengeyokai from leaping any great distance. In this form, frog hengeyokai no longer have the skin gland secretions present in its animal form. Skin coloration matches that of their animal form.

In human form, the frog hengeyokai's most common giveaway features are its eyes, which seem larger than a normal

Frog hengeyokai are as diverse as normal amphibians, appearing in a myriad of colors and patterns.



human's and bulge significantly. Occasionally a frog hengeyokai retains only three fingers and a thumb on its hands when in human form, but this is rare.

Frog hengeyokai can be of any alignment, and therefore have no common "niche" among the character classes.

Lizard Hengeyokai

Just as there is a great variety of lizards so too are there a number of different types of lizard hengeyokai. Some are sleek and streamlined, while others are more like iguanas, with spiked dorsal ridges and jagged dew flaps under their throats. Coloration is usually green or brown, and the size of the lizard form ranges from 10 inches to 2 feet long. Regardless of size, the creature's only attack while in animal form is a bite for 1–2 points of damage.

Like all reptiles, the lizard hengeyokai is cold-blooded, dependent upon its environment for changes in its own internal body temperature. Thus, the creature enjoys basking in the sun in the morning to warm up and hides in the shade when it gets too hot. This trait is true for the animal and bipedal forms, but not its human form; as a human, it

becomes warm-blooded.

In animal form, the hengeyokai's tail can snap off without harming the creature. This is a useful adaptation allowing the hengeyokai to escape from predators; the tail grows back in a week. While the tail-snapping ability doesn't carry over to the hengeyokai's bipedal form, a lizard hengeyokai that loses its tail in animal form has a similarly stumpy tail in bipedal form until it grows back.

The lizard hengeyokai has a distinct advantage in that its bipedal form allows it to pass as a member of another race. By adopting human form a hengeyokai can mingle among humans without anyone being any wiser; similarly, the lizard hengeyokai can adopt its bipedal form and pass as a lizard man (but not a lizard king). The creature's head in this form resembles a larger version of its animal head, but since there is some variety among the lizard man races, lizard hengeyokai are usually believed to be from another "tribe" by any true lizard men (or other similar creatures, such as troglodytes) encountered. Note, however, that lizard hengeyokai do not automatically speak the Lizard Man tongue, although they can learn it.

In human form, there are not many distinguishing traits that might reveal the hengeyokai's true nature. The most common is the size disparity between the creature's human fingers: Just as lizards often have a great difference in the length of their digits, the lizard hengeyokai in human form often has extra-long middle fingers or shortened index fingers, so much so that there may be an inch or more difference between the length of the index and middle fingers. (The ring finger is usually about the same length as the index finger, however.)

Lizard hengeyokai are carnivores in all but their human form. They consider insects a delicacy and must be careful not to indulge their taste for such fare while in human form.

Lizard hengeyokai can be of any alignment and thus adopt a wide variety of character classes. Many of them prefer the active life of armed combat (bushi, fighter, ranger) over classes devoted to quiet study (wu jen, wizard), but this is not indicative of all lizard hengeyokai—there are many spellcasters among this subrace as well.

Lynx Hengeyokai

Lynx hengeyokai live in tall forests with dense undergrowth, although they are also found in the tundra or temperate plains regions. In animal form, they are medium-sized cats, bigger than wildcats but smaller than leopards, with characteristic tufts of fur extending from their ears.

The creatures' tails are

relatively short,

and the sides of their faces have long fur "sideburns." Lynx fur is usually light brown or gray with patterns in a darker shade.

In animal form, lynx hengeyokai feed on small mammals and birds. They are completely carnivorous except in human form, and they spend much of their time in animal form lying in a tree waiting for prey, for they are excellent climbers.

In their human form, lynx hengeyokai retain their long sideburns, regardless of gender. Females often wear their hair in such a fashion as to cover them. Lynx hengeyokai tend to be solitary even in human form, worrying only about



**Lizard
hengeyokai are
often mistaken
for lizard men.**

their own needs and caring little about anyone else.

Many might mistake lynx hengeyokai in bipedal form for some type of werewolf, for there are many similarities between the two. A bestial head sits atop a humanoid body covered in fur. The teeth and claws are present, but they are not as sharp as in animal form, so lynx hengeyokai in this form cannot use them to inflict damage. However, they can use any weapons normally allowed while in human form.

As lynx hengeyokai are evil, they are prohibited from becoming shukenja, rangers, or druids. Most prefer the relatively simple life of the bushi or fighter over those that require rigid discipline, such as the kensai or wu jen.

Octopus Hengeyokai

Octopus hengeyokai are different from other subraces in many ways. First of all, in animal form they are virtually helpless out of water: Their Movement Rate drops to 2, and they start losing hit points at the rate of 1d4 per turn after the first hour spent out of water, due to gradual dehydration. Also, they are the only known hengeyokai that are boneless in animal form. This is an advantage, however, allowing octopus hengeyokai to squeeze through small openings.

Octopus hengeyokai also suffer a serious limitation: They are both deaf and mute in animal form. They compensate for this drawback by having a limited form of telepathy, allowing communication between others of their kind and other animals only. In this way, they can both "speak with animals" and "speak hengeyokai" as shown on **Table 2**, but they cannot "hear" other sounds while in animal form, nor can they "speak" to any other beings. Octopus hengeyokai have eyesight equivalent to that of humans, and their sense of touch far exceeds that of humankind.

Octopus hengeyokai are adept at camouflage, using chameleonlike powers to blend into their environment. Other creatures have only a 10% chance of detecting one when actively camouflaged. Octopus hengeyokai can emit jets of cloudy ink from their bodies, blocking themselves from view long enough to change color and blend into their surroundings. They can also grow

back any severed tentacles in about a month.

The hengeyokai's beaklike mouth is located in the center of its eight tentacles, and it is capable of inflicting 1-3 points of damage.

In human form, octopus hengeyokai are initially indistinguishable from most humans. However, there are several indicators that reveal the creatures' true nature. First of all, the hengeyokai's blood is bluish-green like that of a true octopus (the blood has no iron content but rather is copper-based), even in its human form.

A subtle way to detect an octopus hengeyokai's true nature is to observe its behavior. The octopus changes color involuntarily depending upon its mood, becoming red when angry or frightened and lighter in color when calm. Thus, octopus hengeyokai are used to having their emotional states in full view of others. Even when in human form, they make no effort to hide their feelings. Rather, they tend to act immediately upon their emotions.

If an octopus hengeyokai is detected for what it is, it invariably shifts into its bipedal form. This gives it the added advantages of infravision and the ability to speak with animals without losing any of the advantages it had while in human form (except for being able to pass for a human, which was already compromised). Its bipedal form is a compromise between its animal and its human forms: it has the upright stance of a human yet retains many of its octopus attributes. The head is that of an octopus but is reinforced with a skull. The skull is in turn supported by a spinal column with a full human skeleton (except for the arms). The octopus' eight tentacles fuse into four and become specialized: two serve as legs and are supported by leg bones; the other two serve as arms, but maintain the elasticity of tentacles. The tips of the "arm" tentacles split into

boneless fingers that provide as firm a grip as that of a human.

Octopus hengeyokai are oceanic creatures and do not stray far from the shore. Those who become elementalists are limited to water magic specialization. Because they are evil creatures, they cannot become shukenja, rangers, or druids. The highly dexterous hengeyokai often devote themselves to weapons mastery as kensai or stealthy arts as thieves.

Otter Hengeyokai

The otter is a playful animal, and the hengeyokai subrace based on this creature is of similar demeanor. It spends much of each day in animal form engaging in its favorite pastime: sliding on its belly down slopes into the water.

In animal form it has features like those of normal otters: a sleek, streamlined body covered in brownish fur, webbed hind legs for swimming efficiency, and a whiskered face. The fur is short and dense but plays an important part in the life of the otter, for it traps a

Their inhuman blood is a sure giveaway for octopus hengeyokai.





The owl hengheyokai's wings are useless for flying in bipedal form.

layer of air between the creature's skin and the water, keeping the animal both warm and dry. For this reason, otter hengheyokai spend a lot of time preening their fur, keeping it free of objects that could penetrate their "air shield."

Otter hengheyokai often dig dens in stream banks, using these as their primary lairs. These dens usually have two entrances: one on the stream bank and

one in the rear, providing an escape path to the forest. These creatures often share their dens with normal otters, especially if the hengheyokai have "adopted" the otters as part of their family.

Otters have voracious appetites, eating a quarter of their body weights each day. This attribute carries over to otter hengheyokai, which feed primarily on fish and mollusks but also dine on birds,

frogs, crayfish, and rats. They have powerful jaws capable of crushing open the shells of snails, crabs, and similar creatures, but if they encounter difficulty they simply smash the shells open with a handy rock.

Otter hengheyokai in animal or bipedal form can stay submerged for 6–8 minutes at a time, sealing off their nostrils and ears while underwater.

Rarely are otter hengheyokai encountered in bipedal or human form, for they have the most fun as otters, and fun is what life is all about for them. If threatened, however, otter hengheyokai usually shift to bipedal form. In this form they are larger, more intimidating, and able to employ weapons. The creatures' arms and legs are proportionately larger in bipedal form than in animal form, more closely approximating those of a human. Otherwise, the hengheyokai retain the rest of the otter's features, including the thick, furry tail.

In human form, the otter hengheyokai can usually be spotted by its actions rather than its appearance, although males almost always sport mustaches (no doubt a carry-over of the otter's whiskers). They remain playful, always seeking out new experiences and new ways to have fun—in fact, this is usually why otter hengheyokai take human form in the first place. And, since old habits die hard, an otter hengheyokai in human form still maintains the preening and grooming habits necessary in its animal form: Their hair is constantly combed and straightened, their hands are washed at every opportunity, and their clothes are constantly brushed to keep them lint-free.

As otter hengheyokai are chaotic, they do not have the dedication necessary to become kensai, nor can they become druids. They make good wu jen.

Owl Hengheyokai

The owl hengheyokai is primarily a nocturnal creature in all three of its forms. Its animal form is that of an owl, generally with a wingspan of about 2 feet or so. They have exceptional senses of sight and hearing and can fly in absolute silence due to the structure of their feathers. This ability allows them to strike with a –6 penalty to their enemies' surprise rolls. They inflict 1–2 points of

damage with their talons on a successful hit. Owl hengeyokai are carnivorous, eating small rodents, lizards, snakes, and other birds. Their plumage is light brown, gray, or occasionally white.

The owl hengeyokai's bipedal form sometimes appears to be a 6'-tall owl and is often mistaken at first glance for a giant owl (see the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*® tome under "Bird") or, in the *MYSTARA*® setting, for a hsiao (see the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*® *MYSTARA Appendix* under "Hsiao"). Closer examination reveals that the hengeyokai's arms are formed from the owl's wings, preventing it from flying while in bipedal form. The fingers are scaled like the talons of the feet but do not have claws and cannot be used in combat.

In human form, the owl hengeyokai is often discerned by its actions. Because an owl's eyes are fixed in place, it must turn its head to move the focus of its vision. While this is not the case in human form, the owl hengeyokai nonetheless habitually turns its head instead of moving its eyes. In addition, the owl's hearing is acute because its ears are oriented at different heights along the sides of its head, and this trait often carries over in human form—one ear might be slightly bigger or just a bit higher on the head, or might even stick out perpendicularly.

Owls are traditionally revered for their wisdom, and this is also true of owl hengeyokai. Because of their increased wisdom, owl hengeyokai make excellent shukenja. They are also commonly wu jen. When they take up the role of an elemental, more times than not they choose air magic over the other three elements, although nothing prohibits them from specializing in earth, water, or fire magic.

If the *Oriental Adventures* sub-classes are not used, owl hengeyokai are most appropriate as clerics, mages, or specialist wizards.

Panda Hengeyokai

The panda hengeyokai is rarely seen, for it never strays far from the bamboo groves that provide it sustenance. In animal form, it is indistinguishable from a normal panda and is often found among these creatures, happily chomping away at stalk after stalk of bamboo.

While in its animal form, the panda

hengeyokai maintains an impressive flexibility in its front paws, enabling it to grasp objects quite nimbly. They are dependent upon bamboo as their primary food source but also eat other plants and small rodents or fish that they catch. Unfortunately, the panda is not built for speed, often reaching over 200 pounds.

This does not mean that they are helpless prey to enemies, however. Both pandas and panda hengeyokai are good tree climbers, often seeking the safety of the upper trees as a way to escape from enemies. If antagonized, panda hengeyokai can inflict 2–5 points of damage with their claws each round.

A panda hengeyokai retains its heaviness in human form, ranging anywhere from "pleasingly plump" to "grossly overweight." In some cases there is a slight darkening in skin tone around the eyes, as if the creature didn't quite get enough sleep the night before.

The creature's bipedal form isn't much different from its animal form, other than its upright stance and its lack of claws. The digits of its front legs elongate slightly and become true fingers, enabling the bipedal hengeyokai to use weapons.

In any of its three forms, a panda hengeyokai is generally well-loved by the humans in the area around it. Many people see the panda hengeyokai as a sign of good luck and offer it gifts of food. PC panda hengeyokai make good shukenja or wu jen, but their general clumsiness makes them poor bushi and terrible kensai. If your campaign world does not allow these sub-classes, panda hengeyokai often make good rangers or clerics.

Turtle Hengeyokai

In animal form, the turtle hengeyokai appear as ordinary pond turtles or occasionally snapping turtles, but not one of the great ocean-dwelling sea turtles or giant land-dwelling tortoises. Regardless of the type of turtle, the hengeyokai can bite for only 1 point of damage while in animal form and often rely upon their armored shells to keep them from danger. Turtle hengeyokai can pull their heads and all four limbs into their shells, making it difficult for predators to do them harm. They possess the turtle's



It's no surprise that weasel hengeyokai favor the thief class.

characteristic lack of speed while in animal form.

Although not amphibious, turtle hengeyokai spend much of their time in animal form in freshwater lakes and ponds chasing after fish, worms, and insects. They also enjoy dining upon freshwater plants.

Their bipedal form is that of an upright turtle. Turtle hengeyokai keep the standard turtle physiognomy, with a turtle's head and a full shell, although their limbs become longer and more human in size and shape. (The skin remains that of a reptile, however.) In the MYSTARA campaign, a turtle hengeyokai in bipedal form could easily be mistaken for a turtle. The hengeyokai is equally fast in bipedal form as it is in human form, however, and can wield weapons.

In human form, turtle hengeyokai have no physical characteristic giving

them away. However, they can occasionally be identified by their actions: turtle hengeyokai tend to be ponderous and slow to act without first considering all possible consequences and ramifications of their actions. They also have a habit of choosing defense over offense.

Turtle hengeyokai who become elementalists often become water mages, although specialization in any of the other elements is possible. Because of their defensive nature, turtle hengeyokai bushi are prized as bodyguards.

Weasel Hengeyokai

Weasel and otter hengeyokai share many physical traits, but the two subraces have little else in common. In animal form, the weasel hengeyokai has a long, slim body with a long tail. It uses its serpentine maneuverability to squeeze its way into the burrows of small rodents, which make up most of its diet, although it also eats birds and their eggs. The creature's fur is light brown, lightening to white during the winter months.

The creature's bipedal form appears with the weasel's head and tail on an otherwise human body. The weasel's fur covers the bipedal body, which also retains the weasel's general lankiness. The weasel hengeyokai uses weapons to attack enemies while in its bipedal form. It often allies itself with giant weasels, using its speak with animals ability to order the giant weasels to attack its enemies.

The weasel hengeyokai's human form shares quite a few traits with the animal and bipedal forms. Just as panda hengeyokai tend to be heavysset in human form, the weasel's lankiness carries over to its human frame. Weasel hengeyokai frequently have beady eyes while in human form and prefer nighttime over daylight. Weasel and rat hengeyokai are often found together, plotting evil schemes.

Weasel hengeyokai are known for their cunning. They often become wu jen or wizards, not to mention thieves. Bushi, kensai, and fighters are also popular choices for weasel hengeyokai, and the assassin kit is usually chosen above all others. Because of their evil alignments, weasel hengeyokai cannot become shukenja, rangers, or druids—but then, they usually have nothing but disdain for these character subclasses, anyway.



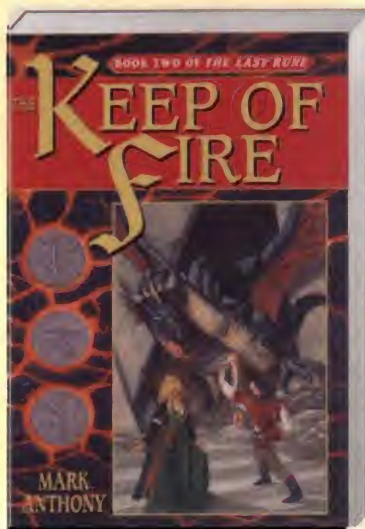
Johnathan M. Richards dedicates this article to "Uncle" Lou Hanes, birdwatcher extraordinaire and all-around great guy. Lou would make a pretty darned good owl hengeyokai.



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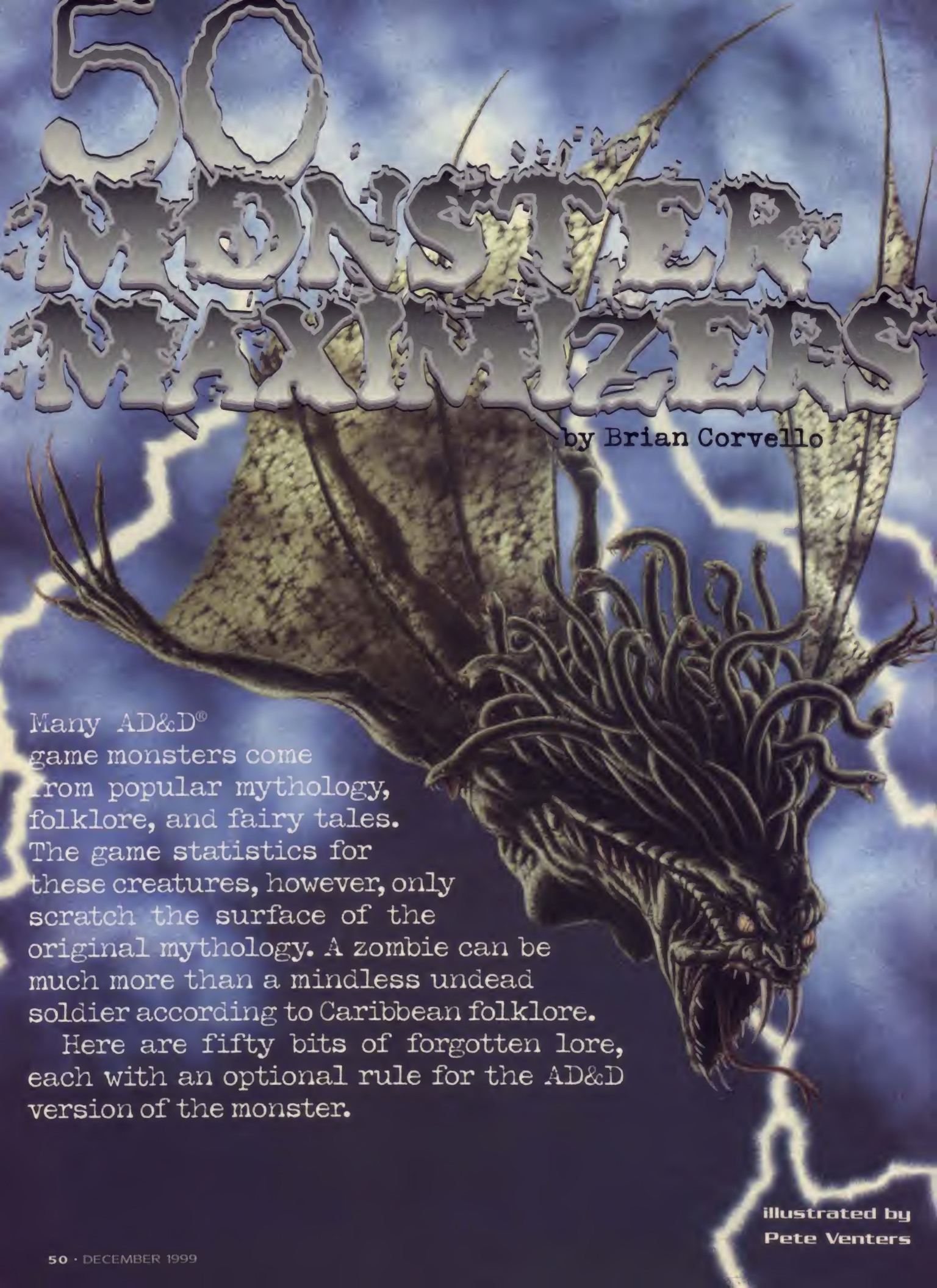
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50 MONSTER MAXIMIZERS



by Brian Corvello

Many AD&D® game monsters come from popular mythology, folklore, and fairy tales. The game statistics for these creatures, however, only scratch the surface of the original mythology. A zombie can be much more than a mindless undead soldier according to Caribbean folklore.

Here are fifty bits of forgotten lore, each with an optional rule for the AD&D version of the monster.

illustrated by
Pete Venters

1 The haunting wail of a **BANSHEE** is an omen of death. If a family with a sick member hears the eerie sound, they can be sure the person will not survive. If the banshee is fought and defeated, however, the sick individual recovers completely.

A terminally diseased character dying in his or her home town has a 5% chance per level of attracting a banshee. The spirit wails a harmless but chilling cry every night until the character dies. If the banshee is slain during this time, the sick person is affected by a *cure disease* spell cast at 12th level.

2 The stupid **CATOBLEPAS** is a spirit of gluttony. Not only does it eat any creature it slays with its deadly gaze, but also it eats its own forelegs and tail if food is scarce. This is of little consequence to the monster, as the limbs soon grow back.

A catoblepas cannot regenerate in combat, but it can regrow a lost limb or tail in 2d6 days.

3 The race of **CENTAURS** is divided into two main families. One branch, the Descendants of Ixion, combine the speed and strength of a horse with the greed and arrogance of humans. These centaurs have gone bad and indulge in endless debauchery. They give allegiance only to the Greek god of wine, Dionysus.

Descendants of Ixion are chaotic neutral and have Low to Average Intelligence. They can become priests of Dionysus, up to 5th level.

4 The other family of **CENTAURS** is known as the Descendants of Chronus. These noble centaurs are far more wise, intelligent, and benign than their cousins, and they pursue a sober life filled with study. Many have educated a number of heroes.

Descendants of Chronos are chaotic good and have Intelligence scores ranging from 11 to 15. They can become priests or druids of any good deity, up to 8th level.

5 An effective antidote for the petrifying touch of the **COCKATRICE** is the rue leaf. Rubbing rue leaves on the stone body of one of the monster's victims restores the victim to flesh and heals any wounds inflicted by the creature.

A restored victim must survive a System Shock roll. Also, the leaves heal only the damage caused by the cockatrice. Eating the leaves has the same effect.

6 The **COCKATRICE's** deadliest enemy is the rooster. The monster never goes near a place inhabited by these birds, as the sound of the rooster's crow causes it to fall dead. The rooster knows this by instinct and always starts crowing when it sees the monster.

The cockatrice is allowed a saving throw vs. death magic; otherwise, the sound of the rooster kills it.

7 Another mortal enemy of the **COCKATRICE** is the weasel.

Weasels are immune to the monster's petrifying touch and attack the beast without mercy. The cockatrice fights back with its sharp beak, but weasels are instinctively aware of the healing power of rue, which they usually know where to find. The weasel usually wins a fight with the cockatrice.

This hatred and immunity extends to giant weasels. Both normal and giant varieties never check morale when confronted with a cockatrice.

8 Some **DWARVES** have the ability to see the future. However, these dwarves tend to be recluses and rarely, if ever, use their ability for the good of other races.

At most, 2% of dwarf NPCs have this ability; PC dwarves never do. Such dwarves are true neutral, inhabit remote locations, and can see three days into the future for every level they have obtained. Most are 9th level or higher.

wizard of great skill. He is a notorious lover, and traces of his elven blood can be found in many communities. He is also an incurable prankster who loves to play jokes. One of his favorite tricks is to impersonate a rich man's favorite riding horse, wait to be mounted, and dump him in a stream.

Robin Goodfellow is a 17th-level chaotic good transmuter. He has been given a gift of immortality by his father—though he can be killed, he does not age. He can often be found in sylvan settings, but only when he desires it.

9 **NEREIDS** are exceedingly vain and accept no comparisons to their beauty. When the queen Cassiopeia bragged that her daughter Andromeda was more beautiful than the nereids, they petitioned Poseidon to punish the queen. The sea god demanded that Andromeda be sacrificed to a sea monster called Cetus. Fortunately, Cetus was slain the hero Perseus.

Only evil nereids are likely to retaliate this way. It might be possible for PCs to manipulate a nereid with flattery, but nereids are allowed a Wisdom check to realize they are being flattered. (Treat a nereid's Wisdom score as equal to her Intelligence).

10 When an **ELEPHANT** knows it is about to die of old age, it travels to one of several hidden groves known as Elephant Graveyards. Once it arrives, it finds a spot amid hundreds of skeletons, takes one last look at life, and dies. Many have tried to follow an old elephant to one of these spots, hoping to claim a fortune in ivory tusks, but elephants are crafty, and most would sooner die in combat than lead a human to the bones of its ancestors.

Should a PC try to follow such a dying elephant, the animal attacks without checking morale if it detects the PC. Should a PC actually make it to a Graveyard, it will indeed yield ivory—at least 10,000 gp worth—but the places are always well trapped and guarded. Several bone golems patrolling the graveyard would not be unusual.

11 One **HALF-ELF** of widely recognized fame is Robin Goodfellow. Robin was the son of a mortal woman and an avatar of Oberon. Robin soon developed a knack for shapeshifting magic and became a

12 Some **GRIFFONS** delight in punishing the greedy. They often lure treasure hunters to their nests and tear them to pieces. If one can defeat such a griffon, the treasure is rich indeed.

These horde-watching griffons could have a treasure type of up to F.

13 The reason **GRIFFONS** delight in eating horses is that they see them as competitors in riding and chariot drawing. Horses are too weak to stand up for themselves, but an intelligent equine—like a unicorn or pegasus—will seldom miss an opportunity to hinder or embarrass a griffon.

14 **HAGS** can be identified by the lair they keep. An annis lair is always a cave with a large pile of bones at the entrance, on which the hag often sits. The bones of anyone foolish enough to come near are soon added to the pile. However, if a sizeable group gathers to hunt her down, the creature usually abandons the lair. Close inspection of the bones shows that she often has to content herself with a diet of sheep and deer when humans aren't available.

At the DM's option, this pile may also be where the monster stores treasure.

15 The gluttonous **HARPIES** often act as agents of the gods. When a mortal offends a deity, the god might send these beasts to attack at a time when a meal is served. The harpies proceed to devour the offender's meal, repeating the attack every day until they are slain or the offender starves to death.

A priest who offends a deity whose area of influence includes nature, charity, or the harvest has a 5% to 50% chance of receiving this punishment, the probability depending on the severity of the offense.

16 **HARPIES** that dwell on coast lines are notoriously sore losers. If a ship does not succumb to their hypnotic singing, they might commit suicide by tossing themselves into the sea.

There is a 5% cumulative chance per defeat that a group of harpies does this. PCs might gain XP awards for it, depending on how clever they were in avoiding the *charm*.

17 Some **HYDRAE** are so venomous that they poison the air around them. Even the hero Heracles nearly succumbed to the poisonous stench of the Lernaean hydra he fought. It would be folly to think that a lesser person could stand up to one.

One in every ten hydrae has a poisonous aura. Every round spent within 20 feet of these hydrae causes 1d6 points damage unless a saving throw vs. poison succeeds. Any water touched by them becomes poison; those who drink it must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or die instantly.

18 **HYDRAE** never sleep; they have a constant activity cycle. This makes *charmed* hydrae excellent guardians for the treasures of kings or even gods. Two treasures known to have been guarded by hydrae are the Golden Fleece and the Golden Apple Tree, planted by Zeus at the End of the World. (This means hydrae are unaffected by magical and poisonous affects that cause sleep.)

19 In a fairy community, **LEPRECHAUNS** often serve as cobblers, making shoes for brownies, pixies, and other fairies. If one hears a faint tapping in sylvan woods, it might be one of these creatures pounding nails into a tiny shoe. When actually seen, the leprechaun has only one shoe in his possession; he hides the other in case he must escape when a mortal sees him.

At the DM's option, leprechauns might be able to construct magical shoes and boots, such as *boots of elvenkind*. The fairies can be persuaded to do this by payment of gold equal to the magical item's worth.

21 The **LION** is the natural enemy of the unicorn. When the two creatures meet, they compete for dominance of the land. Lions always attack unicorns, who return the favor. Unfortunately, the two evenly matched creatures often wind up killing each other.

A lion never checks morale when dealing with a unicorn. It attacks on sight and does not give up until one of them is dead or the unicorn somehow escapes.

22 One **LION** of note was fought by the demigod Heracles at Nemea. The son of a monster called Typhoeus, the Namean lion had skin tougher than steel. Heracles killed the beast by strangling it, but it might have fathered offspring. The lion's skin was used as invulnerable armor for the demigod, aiding him in all further endeavors.

Descendants of the Namean lion have 7 HD and AC -4. Their skin can be made into *leather armor* +2.

23 In tropical rain forests, the **MANTICORE** often poisons its spines with the juice of the *upas* tree, a plant notorious for its venomous sap. Death is immediate for prey struck by these spines, and the victims are devoured at the monster's leisure. The manticore itself is immune to *upas* poison.

Anyone struck by *upas* poison must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or die instantly. On the plus side, the tree's poison can be used by anyone, though it becomes inert after 1d6 days.

20 **LEPRECHAUNS** carry magical snuff-boxes that serve as effective weapons. If caught by a human or demihuman assailant, a leprechaun throws the snuff into the attacker's face; by the time the attacker recovers from sneezing, the leprechaun has vanished.

Those hit by a leprechaun's snuff box, which requires a normal attack roll, must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or collapse into a fit of helpless sneezing for 2 rounds.

24 When a **MANTICORE** feeds, it uses its mighty teeth to crunch up every portion of the corpse. Bones, clothing, and even armor are devoured by the greedy monster. The complete disappearance of a person in the wilderness might be an indication of a manticore's presence.

Manticores leave nothing left of their victims to raise or resurrect.

25 The original **MEDUSA** (as well as her sisters, Stheno and Euryale) had fanlike wings that allowed her to fly like the wind. When Perseus killed Medusa, he would surely have fallen prey to her sisters had not the first pegasus

sprung from her neck; Perseus mounted the steed and escaped. It is not known whether Stheno or Euryale produced offspring, but if they did, some of their descendants might be winged.

Winged medusae fly at a speed of 24, Maneuverability Class D. Greater medusae never have these appendages.

26 A serpentine lock of a **MEDUSA**'s hair is considered an infallible protection against those who seek to control one's mind. Most would argue, however, that obtaining this protection is far more dangerous than fighting an enchanter.

Anyone carrying medusa hair gains a +4 bonus to saving throws vs. Enchantment/Charm magic.

27 **MERFOLK** can predict the weather of the sea accurately. A sailor who befriends these folk can ask them for help. Merfolk aid sailors in this manner as long as their skills aren't squandered on greedy ventures.

Merfolk can predict the weather with 80% accuracy, but only weather over the sea.

28 **MERMAIDS** can throw powerful curses at sailors who offend them. Possible offenses include spying on them, lusting after their beauty, refusing their aid, or especially—trying to cheat them in any way. A fisherman who cheats a mermaid might never catch another fish, and a ship commander who harms one certainly loses his next battle. A mermaid's curse is powerful. One can be removed only by performing an act of atonement to the merfolk. DMs should be fiendish in devising punishments for those who cheat the mermaids.



This manticore cleans its teeth on the bones of slain victims.

29 **MINOTAURS** are also used occasionally as divine retribution. When a ruler offends a deity badly, he might find that one of his cows gives birth to a minotaur. Since this beast eats only human flesh, the despot must sacrifice humans to the beast until it is killed. (Slaying the minotaur would only invoke more punishments from the gods.)

Only an evil power would saddle someone with this punishment, and even then the crime would have to be a great one.

30 One famous **SPIRIT NAGA** was known as the Lambton Worm. This creature possessed an amazing regenerative power that allowed it to put itself back together even after being hacked to pieces. A warrior defeated this monster by wearing razor-studded armor and fighting it in a river (before they could rebound, the pieces were washed away), but the

Worm was surely not the only member of this branch of the family.

A "Lambton" spirit naga can regenerate at the rate of 4 hp per round, and severed parts can reattach themselves by slithering together. Damage from fire and acid cannot be regenerated.

31 Many believe that the beautiful **NYMPHS** are immortal spirits, but this is not so.

Nymphs are long lived, however: Their typical life span is ten thousand human generations. Though they can be a wealth of information, nymphs have been known to trouble mortals with mischief when they have too much time on their hands.

Often (50% of the time), a bored nymph will trouble PCs with druid spells or other forest inhabitants. While causing trouble like this, they never show themselves.

32 **NYMPHS** have been known to succumb to dangerous levels of alcohol consumption, especially when celebrating with satyrs. A band of drunk nymphs are a dangerous mob, tearing apart any unlucky creature who runs into them.

Drunken nymphs are considered temporarily chaotic neutral. If provoked, they attack with their hands, inflicting 1d4 points of damage and using sheer numbers to overbear lone opponents. Victims must still make a successful saving throw vs. spell to avoid blindness or death upon seeing them, but with a +2 bonus.

33 **PERYTONS** are actually undead spirits of men and women, which is why they cast a human shadow. When a wayfarer or merchant is murdered far from home, his spirit might be transformed into a peryton. The carnivorous monstrosity hunts down its killer first, then preys on all other travelers. Only laying its original body to rest in its homeland can appease the spirit.

Considering their origins, perytons can be turned as ghosts.

34 An offshoot of the wicked **RAKSHASAS** are the pishacas. These repulsive, goblinlike beasts live in cemeteries, drinking the blood of their victims and spreading dreadful diseases. Indeed, they are thought to have been the original source of diseases such as leprosy and smallpox.

Pishacas can *cause disease* three times per day. They are otherwise just like normal rakshasas.

35 Another variant type of **RAKSHASAS** are bhutas, which are believed to be creations of the pishacas. Also living in cemeteries, these ghoulish monsters feed on corpses and can call the dead from their graves to attack the living. Bhutas can *animate dead* twice per day. They are otherwise normal rakshasas.

36 Finally, there are the grahas. These **RAKSHASAS**, who also haunt cemeteries, are immaterial. They possess the horrid ability to enter a victim's body through its orifices and destroy the victim from within, causing the victim terrible agony. A graha must make a successful attack roll with a -3 penalty to enter a victim's body. The victim suffers 1d10 points of damage per round and is helpless to act. *Dispel magic* (against 10th level), *dispel evil*, and *protection from evil* can drive the rakshasa out of the body. They are otherwise normal rakshasas.

37 Genies of all varieties consider the **ROC** sacred. A genie can never attack or harm a roc, and woe to anyone who attacks a roc in a genie's presence. Genies go to great lengths to punish anyone who even implies harming one of these creatures, even if they are in the service of the offender.

No genie, no matter how it is summoned, can attack one of these birds. If it sees someone harming a roc, it puts revenge as its first priority.

38 The heat-resistant body of the **ROK SAKAMTHEER** (and that of the larval fire snake) is sought out by practitioners of alchemy. Practically every part of the beast's body can be used for magical items dealing with fire. For example, a coat made from salamander skin provides enough protection from fire to walk on the slopes of an active volcano unharmed.

Such a coat grants immunity to both normal and magical fire. However, the wearer suffers double damage from cold.

39 **SATYRS** owe allegiance to two deities: the god of wine, Dionysus, and the sylvan god Pan. This latter deity is said to be the son of the god Hermes and a nymph. He serves as a god of nature, travelers, and agriculture. Pan's most common appearance is that of a male satyr with a handsome face.

Satyrs can become priests of Dionysus (up to 5th level) and of Pan. Followers of Pan can be either specialty priests (up to 8th level) or druids (up to 10th-level). Specialty priests have major access to the All, Animal, Creation, Plant, and Traveler spheres, and minor access to Healing, Guardian, Protection, and Wards spheres. Pan himself is a lesser power of Arborea, of true neutral alignment.

40 Although the **SPRITES** known as nixies delight in enslaving mortals, a different fate awaits those who spy on their beauty. A man caught watching the water-maidens loses his wits from the power of their song, and he is never the same again.

A nixie's curse reduces the spy's Wisdom score by half. A *remove curse* spell (cast against 8th-level magic) is necessary to restore the lost Wisdom points.

41 The **SPRITES** called pixies can increase or decrease their stature at will, even to the point where they can pose as a human. Their disguises always have telltale signs, however. In addition to the wings, which they must hide, a pixie posing as a human always has bright red hair and green squinting eyes. They often pose as children rather than adults.

Treat this ability as the spell *enlarge*, usable once per day, at the 10th-level of ability.

42 It is well known that **SPRITES** delight in leading travelers astray with their ability to cause confusion. However, a traveler can foil the sprites simply by putting a coat or shirt on backward. This confuses the sprites and sends them away.

A PC who does this becomes immune to a sprite's *confusion* ability.

43 Lilith is the most powerful **DEMONS** and all other succubi pay homage to her. Lilith is a foul temptress who seduces men of great power to destroy and enslave them. Lilith's usual form is a woman of unparalleled beauty, but in whatever form she takes, her legs are covered with coarse hair. Unfortunately, Lilith is a mistress of deceit, and victims rarely see this sign until it is too late.

DMs who wish to introduce this fiend into a high-level campaign should prepare a formidable foe, surely of no less power than an Abyssal Lord.

44 **TROLLS** have the fearsome ability to transform human women they capture into monsters like themselves. This transformation occurs gradually, after the victim has spent several weeks in the monster's lair. Once transformed, the troll-wife, as the victim is then called, becomes a ravenous man-eater until the spell is broken.

A female held captive in a troll's lair must make a successful saving throw vs. spell every week to avoid being *polymorphed* into a troll. This effect can be reversed by a *dispel magic* spell cast against 9th-level. Although stupid, trolls know they have this ability and devour their female victims only 50% of the time.

45 For those wishing to procure a **UNICORN'S** magical horn, the best way to do so is to bring a virgin maiden into a unicorn-protected wood. If the maiden sits by an oak tree, the unicorn will eventually come to her and put its head in her lap. It offers no resistance, even if its horn is sawed off.

A unicorn is allowed a saving throw vs. spell to avoid this effect.

46 The best way to find the grave of a **VAMPIRE** without magic is through the following method. A pure white stallion that has never sired a foal must be ridden by a young chaste boy. The virginal pair must be led through a cemetery, walking over the graves. Any grave the horse absolutely refuses to step over, no matter how much it is urged, is undoubtedly the grave of a vampire.

47 A good way to protect one's home or establishment from a **VAMPIRE** is to sprinkle grain or salt on the ground in front of the entrance. Vampires have a compulsive urge to count things and will be compelled to count the grains, even if they must do so until the sun comes up.

The vampire is allowed a saving throw vs. spell to avoid this effect; otherwise, counting takes 2 hours per handful of grain used.

48 Woe to the ship crew that beholds the great **WHALE** Leviathan. A raging furnace burns within the creature's gut, causing the sea to boil before it appears. Worse, it can belch flame at any ship unlucky enough to anger it, reducing even the mightiest craft to ashes.

This breath weapon causes 1d4 points of damage per Hit Die of the beast and can be used three times per day. Any creature in the water when an angry leviathan is around is boiled alive, suffering 1d10 points of damage per round. Naturally, a swallowed victim is instantly killed by the intense heat.



You can't lead a chaste horse and rider over a vampire's grave.

49 A branch of the **YETI** family, known as the wendigo, is known for subtler tactics than its cousin. Instead of attacking outright, the wendigo trails a lone victim, keeping just out of sight, while whispering horrid threats. The victim is eventually driven mad by this pursuit, to be devoured at the monster's leisure.

Wendigos are very intelligent (11–12 Intelligence). A victim trailed by one must make a Wisdom Check each day or lose his or her sanity and become a babbling, helpless wreck. These creatures are otherwise normal yeti.

50 If a **ZOMBIE** so much as touches salt, it immediately realizes that it is supposed to be dead. Ignoring its master, it seeks the nearest graveyard; once there, if no one stops it, it inter itself in the ground and returns to

an unanimated state. Further attempts to *animate* the body prove difficult. The zombie is allowed a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the effect of the *animate dead* spell; if the saving throw fails, the zombie can never again be *animated*.

Recommended Reading

Bullfinch, Thomas.
Bullfinch's Mythology.
New York. Avanel Books. 1979

Page, Michael and Ingpen, Robert.
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New York. Viking Books. 1990.

Time Life Books.
The Enchanted World Series.
Time Incorporated. 1980.

Brian Corvello has been a mythology buff since age five, when his mother gave him a book of Greek Myths as a Christmas present. Even today, he finds mythology more exciting than the average modern fantasy novel.



illustrated by Carl Critchlow

Fiction by
Troy Denning

The Innkeeper's Secret

The village was as empty as a drunkard's purse. The narrow streets, flanked on both sides by walls of white-washed stone as high as cliffs, were murky and still. Gaping archways opened into fragrant courtyards filled with gardens of snowy iris and mountain rose. Cramped intersections turned down tidy lanes of clean-scrubbed cobblestones, then disappeared into silence.

"It's too quiet here," said Tanalasta Obarskyr, reining her mount to a halt. "Should we have a look?"

Her companion, a pot-bellied old man with a cascading white beard and a menacing twinkle to his eye, merely guided his horse around hers. "I like the quiet. Maybe the villagers do, too."

"There's quiet, Vangerdahast, and there's dead quiet." Tanalasta pulled her foot from its stirrup, then dismounted and stepped toward a door.

"Careful, Princess," Vangerdahast called. "It would trouble me if I had to blast some wretch who's only defending his home."

"Defending his home? From what?"

Vangerdahast stopped and peered back at her. "Look at yourself. A cautious man could mistake your intentions."

Tanalasta glanced down at herself. Like the wizard himself, she was dressed in a drab brown cloak and tattered traveling clothes selected especially to make her look poor and trail-worn. Only her boots, still stiff and new despite diligent efforts to scuff them, betrayed the disguise.

"Perhaps I am being too inquisitive."

"Very sensible. They're probably driving their flocks to high pasture. We'll find more fitting subjects for your education in Skull Crag." Despite his words, Vangerdahast's baggy eyes betrayed a strange hint of disappointment.

"No doubt." Tanalasta eyed the wizard thoughtfully, trying to guess the source of his dissatisfaction. "Thieves and murderers are so much more instructive than honest farming folk."

"I'm glad you agree, my dear."

Vangerdahast urged his mount forward, leaving Tanalasta to scramble after him and wonder what she had done wrong this time. It had been two months since she and the old wizard had ridden out of the palace to educate her in the ways of the world. So far, that education had consisted of seven wonderful days in the forest and as many tendays being propositioned and pinched in an endless succession of taverns and festhalls. Whatever the wizard was trying to teach her, Tanalasta felt no closer to learning it than the day they had left Suzail. She

clenched her teeth and followed Vangerdahast through the labyrinth of silent streets past an old, crumbling house at the edge of town.

With shuttered windows and an overgrown courtyard full of brambles, the house seemed a melancholy ghost of the lovely home it had once been. The white-wash on its walls had powdered away, exposing the dreary gray stone beneath, and the bottoms had long since rotted out of its flower-boxes, leaving little piles of gray dirt strewn along the foundation beneath its windows. The smell of cats hung about the place so thickly that Tanalasta was forced to cover her nose and mouth as they passed. Instead of being disgusted, she was overcome by a sense of deep sorrow for whatever misfortune had reduced the residents of the place to such a sad state.

They continued up the road past a small inn with vacant stables and emerged into a small mountain valley. The road was flanked by a pair of lush barley fields. Beyond the barley fields, ascending the mountainside in a series of long serpentine terraces, were dozens of hay tracts. Like the barley fields, they were as green and rich as any Tanalasta had seen in the prized bottomlands of the Manticore Valley.

The low murmur of singing voices drifted down the road, then Tanalasta and Vangerdahast came to a small cemetery. At the far end stood a hundred villagers, all dressed in black and gathered around seven mounds of fresh dirt. No one seemed to be sobbing or trembling, and the women were staring at the ground while the men cast anxious glances at the gathering clouds.

As Tanalasta and Vangerdahast passed by, one of the villagers scurried down to meet them at the cemetery wall. A frog-faced man with a portly build, he arrived mopping the sweat from his brow.

"Hold a moment, my friends! Are you bound for Condor Pass?"

"And if we were, what business would that be of yours?" demanded Vangerdahast.

The sparkle left the fellow's eyes, but his practiced grin remained. "No business of mine, except that I will have to bury you. There's trouble in the pass."

"What sort of trouble?" asked Vangerdahast.

The man's eyes shifted away. "I couldn't tell you, but the priests are coming from Huthduth." He gestured vaguely over the mountains, at the same time surreptitiously eyeing their tattered riding clothes. His brow rose slightly when his gaze fell on the new boots in Tanalasta's stirrups, then rose some more as he

inspected Vangerdahast's thoroughbred stallion, Cadimus. "Until they arrive, you will be safe here at my inn—and safety comes at very reasonable price. Only one gold crown a night."

"You overestimate our value, sir. We are only poor scribes in search of work." Vangerdahast slapped the reins against Cadimus's neck, urging the stallion up the road.

The innkeeper raised his brow, then called, "That price is for both! Two rooms for one crown!"

"Save your breath," said Tanalasta, starting after Vangerdahast. "My uncle is a stubborn man."

The innkeeper scurried along the wall after her. "Please, you must talk some sense into him! No one has made it across Condor Pass in days. I myself have no need of scribes, but if your reluctance is only a matter of funds, I am certain we can work out an arrangement."

Tanalasta stopped, her suspicions aroused by the innkeeper's generosity. "You know what's in that pass?"

Again, the innkeeper's eyes shifted away. "I haven't seen the trouble for myself, but it is certainly wiser to wait for the priests."

"It's undead?"

The innkeeper glanced toward the other villagers. When he found their eyes turned in his direction, his face grew red, and he stepped away from the wall. "I've already told you everything I know."

Then thank you for the warning, good sir," Tanalasta said, her voice sarcastic. She started up the road after Vangerdahast. "I'm sure it's better than nothing."

"Your fate is your own doing," called the innkeeper. "If you and your uncle are too proud to accept a stranger's advice, it is no fault of mine!"

Tanalasta fell in behind Vangerdahast and rode toward Condor Pass in silence. The pass lay less than five miles distant, hidden behind a chain of snaggleteethed peaks. Though the princess could not imagine crossing such a range even on foot, the road ahead pointed toward it like a crooked arrow, meandering along the valley floor until it disappeared into a forest of black oaks and purple shadows. She urged her mount forward and rode alongside Vangerdahast.

They continued along the valley bottom another four miles, then began to switchback up a steep slope. The horses snorted and nickered with effort, and a chill breeze hissed down through the trees. Tanalasta wrapped herself into her cape and peered into the shadows above. The higher they climbed, the more her spine prickled.

At last, the road crested the slope and turned west, traveling through a tunnel-like passage of arching oak boughs. At the end of the passage, the road broke out of the woods, then entered a distant gorge and vanished between a pair of granite walls as precipitous and sheer as the peaks Tanalasta had glimpsed earlier. The sight seemed to make even Vangerdahast nervous; he opened his dingy traveler's cloak and began to fiddle with the wands hidden inside.

They had traveled only a dozen paces when an eerie cacophony of baying and woofing and yapping erupted deep in the forest. Tanalasta turned to see an enormous dog pack bounding through the trees toward them. For the most part, the beasts were the large shaggy kind favored by Storm Horn shepherds, but there were also long-eared trackers, sleek-coated guardians, and even tiny lap pets. All ran with fangs bared and slaver dripping from their muzzles, and their eyes were universally feral and dark. Tanalasta guided her mount around behind Vangerdahast, placing the wizard between herself and danger as they had rehearsed a dozen times.

Vangerdahast drew a wand from his cloak and waved it in the general direction of the dogs. A blazing curtain of scarlet shot up in front of them, cutting the beasts off from the road. There was a brief chorus of snarls and yelps, then the lead dogs came tumbling out of the wall sheathed in flames. They managed only a few steps before they fell whimpering to the ground.

Tanalasta looked away from the gruesome sight and glimpsed a small white paw swinging down from an overhanging limb. She ducked, then shrieked and hurled herself from the saddle when four little claws raked the flesh of her eyelid.

By the time she hit ground, Vangerdahast was already bellowing a spell. A bolt of golden magic lit the air, then her attacker gave a startled 'meow' and drifted to ground in a drizzle of splinters, fur, and whiskers.

"Vangerdahast! That was a cat!" In Cormyr, it was considered bad luck to harm a cat. "Did you have to kill it?"

"You'd rather I let it scratch your other eye out?" Vangerdahast dismounted and knelt at Tanalasta's side. "How bad?"

"I'm fine." She wiped the blood from her vision, feeling along the wound to make certain it didn't extend into her eye.

Vangerdahast slapped her hand away. "Let me look."

Behind him, the dogs were howling and pacing back and forth in an attempt to bypass the fiery wall. They were not having much luck. Vangerdahast had anchored the near end against the cliff at the mouth of Condor Pass. The other end lay a quarter mile distant, all but invisible in the smoky depths of the forest.

"You'll live." Vangerdahast hoisted Tanalasta into her saddle.

She wiped the blood from her eye again, then heard leaves rustling above and glanced up to find another cat crouching on the shattered branch overhead. She carefully backed her horse away, then noticed dozens of small silhouettes creeping out onto limbs overhanging the road.

"Thauglor's scales!" she gasped. "They're everywhere!"

"And those fools sent for priests?" Vangerdahast harumphed, climbing onto Cadimus's back. "A war wizard and a few Purple Dragons would—"

Vangerdahast was interrupted when a bundle of yowling fur came flying out of a nearby tree. He ducked in time to spare his eyes, but the cat landed on Cadimus's croup and dug in. The stallion bolted, and the wizard barely caught hold of the

saddlehorn before he slipped a stirrup and continued down the road with one foot waving in the air and one hand skipping off the ground.

Half-blinded by a haze of blood, Tanalasta urged her mount after Vangerdahast. From somewhere ahead came a series of loud snorts, followed by the crash of something large and angry in the underbrush. Cadimus's hooves changed rhythm, then the old wizard screamed and thudded to the ground.

Tanalasta wiped her eyes clear and saw Vangerdahast's pearly stallion galloping down the road riderless. The wizard was tumbling along the road with a huge black hog trotting after him, hooves flailing and snout snapping. The Royal Magician rolled aside with surprising agility for a man of his girth, slapping the beast in the flank and speaking a single mystic word. A blue spark crackled into the boar's meaty shoulder, then it went rigid and dropped. Two more of the creatures came crashing out of the undergrowth to take its place.

"Vangey!" Tanalasta tried to point and nearly fell from her horse. "Behind you!"

Vangerdahast spun on his heel, already reaching for a wand, then Tanalasta was past him, galloping up the road behind his horse. Cats began to fall around her like a summer rain, hissing and yowling and lashing out at her with their claws, and twice she had to tear one from her mount's neck and drop it to the road.

Tanalasta was only a half-dozen steps behind Cadimus when they broke out of the forest. The stallion drew up short, and her mare crashed into its rear quarter, pitching the princess forward onto its back. She caught herself on Vangerdahast's empty saddle, then found herself staring down at a billy goat of sturdy alpine stock.

The goat considered Tanalasta for a moment, then lowered its head and launched itself into Cadimus's ribs. The startled stallion retreated into Tanalasta's mare, pushing the princess back into her saddle, and the billy goat gathered itself to spring.

Tanalasta raised her hand and spoke the single magic spell Vangerdahast had taught her, sputtering the tangled syllables off so quickly she did not think she had done it correctly until a bolt of golden magic blasted the goat off the road.

Cadimus reared, then Tanalasta caught hold of his reins and looked back to check on Vangerdahast. The dogs had finally worked their way around the far end of the fire wall and were beginning to bound up the road toward Condor Pass. A quarter mile ahead of them, Vangerdahast was scurrying up the road, covered in cats and using one of his wands to blast pony-sized hogs out of his path. Though he was being clawed and bitten mercilessly, none of the attacks drew blood, and even the heaviest swine were bouncing off his legs as they attempted to bowl him over.

Tanalasta turned back to Condor Pass, urging her mare past Cadimus—then stopped cold when she found a little

wild-haired lady blocking the road.

"By Symylazarr!" Tanalasta gasped, swearing on the name of the royal sword of honor. "Where did you come—"

"Look what you've done!" The old woman pointed at the goat Tanalasta had killed, which lay where it had fallen with a smoking hole in its chest. "He was such a handsome boy, and now . . . now he's gone."

"Yes . . . well, he was attacking me," said Tanalasta, struggling to make sense of the woman's soil-stained dress and bare feet. "I'll be happy to recompense you—"

"Recompense me?" The old lady's feet left the ground, and she began to float toward Tanalasta. "It wasn't me you wronged!"

Tanalasta brought Cadimus around between her and the woman, then backed her own horse toward the forest. "Vangey? I've some kind of ghou here."

Vangerdahast's voice immediately rose in a spell-casting, but he was cut off as the dogs caught up and overwhelmed him in a storm of barking and snarling. The spell misfired, ricocheting through the trees in knells and flashes. The forest erupted into a tempest of growls, curses, and the sporadic crackle of magic wands being bitten in two.

The woman floated over Cadimus's back. Her eyes were as black as wells, and she smelled horribly of cat urine, and her flesh had the liquid pallor of a corpse well into its decay. Tanalasta grew queasy and weak with the unimaginable stench. The old lady reached out with a pair of filthy hands. The princess pulled her dagger and drove it into the ghou's stomach, angling the blade up toward the heart.

The old lady continued to come. "Murderous trollop!"

She grasped Tanalasta by the throat and began to squeeze, and Tanalasta's vision grew dark. She pushed the blade in deeper, twisting and slashing as her defense tutors had instructed.

The woman smiled. A black twinkle appeared in the depths of her pupils and blossomed into an ebony starburst, then expanded until it exploded out of her eyes and into Tanalasta's. The princess managed a gurgled cry of surprise and released the dagger and began to flail wildly at her attacker. She could see nothing now but the darkness inside her head. It continued to expand, clouding her mind with murky black anguish. She experienced a strange sense of violation and felt herself falling, and the gloom grew as thick as ink, and that was the last thing she saw until Vangerdahast appeared above her, staring down from the other end of an endless black tunnel.

"Tanalasta?" He slapped her cheeks rather harder than was necessary. "Come along, girl!"

Tanalasta's vision returned, and she saw that although the animals had torn Vangerdahast's clothes into rags and

*Cats began to fall
around her like a
summer rain,
hissing and
yowling and
lashing out at her
with their claws.*

destroyed his magic wands, the wizard himself remained entirely unmarked.

"I'm still alive?" she gasped, still struggling to reorient herself.

"Of course I came after you. Did you think I'd let you die—especially after what you did?" Vangerdahast pointed at the old lady's corpse, which lay beside Tanalasta with the hilt of her dagger protruding from the abdomen. "I'd still be the object of a very unpleasant tug-of-war if you hadn't killed her."

"Kill her? I didn't kill her." Tanalasta took Vangerdahast's arm and sat up to find the dogs sitting around her in a near perfect circle. The pigs were snorting the nearby underbrush, the cats lolling on the branches overhead, and there were even some sheep bleating somewhere in the woods. Tanalasta gasped, then released Vangerdahast's arm and rubbed her bruised throat. "She was already dead. I stabbed her, but she kept coming and choked me, then I went blind—"

"But you are well now, and that is the important thing." Vangerdahast cast a uneasy glance at the creatures surrounding them, then wrapped his fingers around her arm. "Still, I think it wisest to teleport back to Suzail."

"Not Suzail," Tanalasta said. "Torrinville."

"The village?" Vangerdahast shook his head. "No. You've been through a lot, and I want the Royal Healers to—"

"I don't give a damn what you want," Tanalasta snapped. Her sharp tone surprised even her, and it caused several cats to rise and arch their backs menacingly. She took a breath, then continued in a more reasonable tone. "There's some secret in that village that explains all this."

Vangerdahast lifted his brow. "If that is your command, Princess, but—"

"Now, Vangerdahast."

The wizard's bushy eyebrows came together, but as he took Tanalasta's wrist and cast the spell, there was a hint of a smile in his eyes. The princess's stomach rose into her chest, and the world vanished around her. There was a timeless interval of numb colorless falling in which she was aware of nothing but Vangerdahast's fingers around her wrist and the stillness of her own heart, and then she was somewhere else, standing outside a simple plank door, attempting to blink away the teleport afterdaze and recall where she was.

Before she fully succeeded, the door swung open. On the other side stood a stout little man with a round face and hawk nose and bulging white eyes. His mouth fell open to scream, then he managed to catch hold of himself and merely stumbled back clutching at his chest.

"By the plow! It is only our poor scribes." He let out a deep breath, then took his hand away from his heart. "Oh my, did you give me a scare!"

"And why is that?" Tanalasta asked, recalling where they were. "Didn't you expect to see us alive?"

If the innkeeper was troubled by her question, he did not show it. "In truth, no. I was on my way out to help the others collect your bodies." He flashed his ready, yellow-toothed grin,

then said, "But I am very happy to see you have saved us the trouble. It will give the village a reason to celebrate . . . I assume you will be staying until the priests come?"

Vangerdahast and Tanalasta answered together, the wizard saying "No," and the princess saying, "Yes."

Tanalasta narrowed her eyes at the old wizard. "We will be staying, Uncle."

"Very well." Vangerdahast tugged at the tattered strings that had once tied his shredded purse to his belt, then gave her a waggish smile. "Though I don't know how we'll pay the bill."

The innkeeper's grin vanished, but he shook his head and gave a philosophical shrug. "I have no use for scribes, but my poor wife is always happy to let someone else carry trays." He pointed Tanalasta toward the log stairs in the back of the serving room. "Go and rest while you can. I'll send my wife up with something clean for you to wear."

That "something" turned out to be a red serving frock with a neckline scooped so low Tanalasta could not lean down to set a flagon on a table without drawing the eye of every man in the room straight to her bosom. Of course, it was exactly what Elbur the innkeeper wanted.

Once the celebration started, the princess was kept too busy serving to feel self-conscious about being ogled, but she did find time to learn that the old lady in the pass had once lived in the foul-smelling house across the road. Apparently, the woman had turned into something of a recluse after her husband died, preferring the company of dozens of cats—some said hundreds—to that of her fellow villagers. No one would say anything more, except that her name had been Sorela Dunsleigh and they had no idea what caused her to become a ghoulish haunting the pass. Eventually, they refused to say even that much, preferring instead to listen to Vangerdahast's increasingly exaggerated versions of the pair's escape—none of which bore any semblance to the truth. By the time the villagers' thirst began to subside, the old wizard was so deeply into his cups he was slurring even the middle of his words. The next time he waved his empty mug at Tanalasta, she pretended not to notice and looked out the window.

Outside, a fat yellow cat sat on one of the fenceposts enclosing the inn's small courtyard, preening itself in the moonlight and periodically peering into the noisy building. A feeling of warmth and contentment welled up inside Tanalasta, and she found herself thinking that with Rochefort back on his perch, the village would soon seem like home again.

The thought sent a chill down Tanalasta's spine, for it had risen unbidden from the depths of her mind and could hardly have been her own. She had no reason to think of Torrinvill as home, nor had she ever heard of a cat named Rochefort.

Vangerdahast bumped past Tanalasta and slammed his flagon on the serving counter. "Another ambrosia, good man!"

Elbur cast a discreet glance at Tanalasta, and she was quick to shake her head. Something was wrong, and the last thing she needed was for the wizard to sink deeper into his cups.

"Sorry, old fellow," said the innkeeper. "You've already

drunk your niece's wages for the night."

Vangerdahast squinted at the man and muttered something about teaching him to respect his betters, then began to raise his hand.

Tanalasta slapped it down. "What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing a fresssh mug won't cure," Vangerdahast slurred. Tanalasta felt a deft hand slip into her apron pocket, then the wizard turned back to Elbur and slapped a handful of coppers on the counter. "I ssheem to have found some coins."

An acid anger foreign to Tanalasta boiled up inside, and she shoved the wizard roughly toward his seat. "Sit down before you fall down, Uncle." The words were her own, even if the bitterness that made her speak so sharply was not. "I'll bring you your mug."

Vangerdahast's eyes widened at the rough treatment, but he gave Tanalasta a crooked smirk—which only angered her more—and returned to his seat. "You're a good neesh."

Tanalasta rolled her eyes and turned toward the serving counter. As she waited for Elbur to fill the flagon, she grew angrier. It was just like Vangerdahast to be drunk when she needed him sober. She doubted he could remember his spells, much less pronounce the incantations. Her ire continued to grow as she contemplated his irresponsibility, and by the time the innkeeper slid the mug to her, it was a fury beyond her control, a living breathing thing with a will of its own. Tanalasta watched in amazement as her hand snatched up the flagon and carried it over to the wizard. She felt herself smile sweetly, then saw her wrist turn the mug over and begin to empty the contents into the wizard's lap.

Vangerdahast's eyes dropped, and he sat calmly watching as the wet stain spread across his hips and down his thighs. Tanalasta's hand continued to pour until the flagon was empty, then banged the mug down on the table.

She heard herself ask, "Would you like another, Uncle?"

The room erupted into a tumult of laughter, and even Vangerdahast cracked an approving smile.

"I think not, Niece," he said. The wizard's slur disappeared as if by magic, though no one else appeared sober enough to notice it. "Apparently, I have had enough."

"Nonsense!" slurred Calder, a horse-faced farmer who had bought more mead than he drank, no doubt for the pleasure of watching Tanalasta serve it. "A round for the house!"

And Tanalasta was off and running again, though she was not too busy to notice how carefully Vangerdahast sipped at the new flagon she set before him, or his rare expression of approval as he watched her bustle about her duties. Though she did not understand what had happened, she sensed that she had finally stepped over some invisible threshold he had quietly been waiting for her to cross. The irony was that she had felt so out of control at the time.

Truth be told, she still did. Her anger had given way to a strange giddiness that seemed even more foreign to her than

the ire it had replaced. She swirled through the room like a dancer, urging Elbur's patrons to drink up and leaning over a little farther for those who crossed her palm with two coppers instead of one. As unseemly as the behavior was for a princess, Vangerdahast did not seem to disapprove, and it would not have mattered if he did. Several times, Tanalasta tried to tell him how queer she was feeling, how she seemed unable to control what she was doing. Each time she found herself twirling away to stroke a farmer's weatherbeaten cheek or kiss the brow of some handsome young lad.

Another pair of cats, Orlene and Astolpho—Tanalasta could not say how she knew their names—appeared on the fence posts outside, and beyond them she caught a glimpse of several sheep trotting down the moonlit street. She began to sing and dance as she served. Elbur's patrons urged her on with clapping and cheers and ever-larger tips, and when

everyone's mugs were full, the princess climbed onto a table to dance a ribald little jig her sister had taught her.

Vangerdahast was on his feet instantly, scurrying forward to pull her down. "This is no way for a prin—er—scribe to act!"

Tanalasta dodged his grasp and continued to dance, waving her skirts and kicking her legs up in some high-step she did not even know.

She had the sensation of being shoved off to the fringes of her own skull. Her vision was growing dark, and the men's voices were sounding faint. Her body began to seem outside her, a strange and alien animal with a will all its own. Somewhere outside, a dog howled at the moon, then she saw Cadimus and her own mare sticking their heads through the window, and a sudden hush fell over the inn, and the world began to feel a dark and distant thing.

Again, Vangerdahast reached for Tanalasta's legs. Her feet lashed out and kicked his hands aside, then caught him squarely in the chin. The blow sent him stumbling back, and he found himself sprawled across a shard-strewn table, staring up at a black-eyed harridan in Tanalasta's guise. The princess's face, usually pensive and kind, was screwed into a mask of anger and spite, and her wagging tongue was spewing vows of reprisal and punishment that had the villagers cowering under their tables. Dogs were scratching at the door and cats leaping through the window, and only Elbur, rushing forward to slam the shutters, seemed sober enough to react intelligently.

Vangerdahast cursed; finally, he had goaded Tanalasta into showing some spirit, and it turned out she was possessed. He reached into one of his cloak's few remaining pockets and withdrew a scrap of silk, then began the incantation of a web spell.

Tanalasta pointed. "Rocheport, now!"

A large yellow cat came flying off a table and dug all four claws into Vangerdahast's arm. His hand swung wide and sprayed a thick mesh of white filaments across the stairwell,

*Her body began
to seem outside
her, a strange and
alien animal with
a will all its own.*

and the wizard screamed and flung the cat off.

The creature hit the magic web and stuck there, its fangs and claws dripping red. Vangerdahast spun back to find Tanalasta rushing out the door dragging a strapping young farmer along behind her. "Wait!"

He started after her, but a pack of snarling dogs bounded in past her and bowled him over. A huge sheepdog clamped down on his arm and shook him like something it had caught sneaking up on the flock. Vangerdahast grunted, then hissed a single mystic word. The beast yelped and collapsed, smoke rising from its scorched fur.

The wizard lay for a moment, grinding his teeth and berating himself for not teleporting Tanalasta back to Suzail the instant she began acting strangely. The room around him was filled with the crash, curse, and growl of men battling animals, and there was no telling what had become of the princess. He extracted his arm from the sheepdog's mouth and rolled to his knees. Though Elbur had managed to shutter the windows and close the doors, the dogs and cats already in the room were getting the best of their former masters.

Vangerdahast plucked a ribbon of torn cloth from his sleeve, then rolled it into a twinelike strand and uttered a long string of mystic syllables. At once, a dense thicket of ropes sprouted from the floor and began to dance about. The wizard pointed to a large guarddog and twirled his finger. One of the cords entwined the beast from tail to tooth, then pulled it off the villager it had been savaging.

Vangerdahast repeated the gesture, tearing a small red cat off a farmer's head, then began to work his way outward in an ever-widening circle. Within a few moments, he had the entire room under control, with the crazed animals bundled into squalling packages and Elbur's bleeding patrons staring at him in confusion. The situation outside the inn did not sound so good. The cats were scratching wildly at the closed shutters, and the dogs were baying in the streets.

Vangerdahast found a healing potion tucked away in the remains of his cloak, then dabbled a few drops over his mangled arm and drank the rest. The bleeding stopped, and the edges of the wounds began to close.

Calder was the first one to notice. He gestured at Vangerdahast's arm, then cried, "A healer!"

"Wizard," Vangerdahast corrected. He eyed the villagers angrily, then said, "Tell me what's going on here."

The men looked around the room, their blurry gazes shifting from one person to another until they all settled on Elbur.

The innkeeper shrugged. "We don't know. That's why we sent for the priests—"

"Enough!" Vangerdahast withdrew a signet ring from his belt pouch, then held it out to display the royal dragon. "Now answer—and be quick! The woman who just walked out of here is the Crown Princess Tanalasta Obarskyr—or at least she used to be."

Calder squinted at the ring, then grew pale and turned to Elbur. "I think we'd best do as the sorcerer says."

Elbur looked from the wizard to the others, who all looked to the floor. "I didn't mean any harm," the innkeeper began. "But the smell was awful. Sorela and her cats were driving away all my customers."

"So you killed her?"

"Not on purpose," said Calder. "We only meant to be rid of her cats. They were overrunning the whole town."

"But Sorela wouldn't have it," explained Elbur. "She came out swinging her broom, and the next thing we knew, her cats were all over us, and our own dogs were snapping at our heels. Then Ash's son grabbed hold of her..."

The innkeeper turned to a hairy, hulking villager who had not yet lifted his gaze from the floor.

"She just sort of broke." Still looking at his feet, Ash shrugged. "He didn't mean to... Henry wouldn't hurt a mouse... and now she has him..."

Tears began to stream from the big man's eyes, and he turned away without finishing. Vangerdahast waited perhaps half-a-second, then slammed his palm on a table.

"What next?" he demanded. "I have a princess to rescue."

"And then we laid her out for the night," Calder continued. He laid a comforting hand on Ash's meaty shoulder. "We sang the Prayers of Return and prepared a grave to receive her at dawn—"

"But when morning came, Sorela was gone," Vangerdahast surmised. "Because cat-ladies don't worship Chauntea—they worship Malar the Beastlord."

Tanalasta had been right about stopping to investigate the village, of course. She was so often right about so many things, but she had let him browbeat her into continuing—just as she allowed anyone with a sure manner and a gruff voice to bully her into their agendas instead of her own. Perhaps Lord True-silver and his supporters were right; perhaps Tanalasta simply lacked the raw nerve to rule the realm.

Vangerdahast shook his head in disgust, then turned to Elbur. "I need a quiet place to concentrate."

"You may use my own chamber," the innkeeper volunteered.

"And your largest jewel."

"My what?" Elbur gasped.

"Your largest gemstone—and your hardest," Vangerdahast said. "Unless you'd rather trust Sorela's soul to something small and brittle."

"Not on my life!" said the innkeeper. "I can give you a sapphire as big my thumb."

"That will do, I suppose." Vangerdahast shooed the innkeeper off to fetch the jewel, then motioned Calder and Ash over. "In the morning, you'll find me with Elbur's sapphire in my hand. You will take the gem and carry me out to find the princess—er, the witch. When Sorela shows herself, make certain she sees the gem."

Calder's eyes widened. "You're going to switch places with the witch's soul?"

Vangerdahast nodded. "Then I'll return to my own body, leaving her inside the gem."

"Maybe we should wait for the priests," suggested Calder. "Aren't souls their concern?"

"The welfare of the crown princess is my concern," Vangerdahast bristled. "The spellbagger has not been born who can protect her better than I."

The two villagers exchanged doubtful glances, but the wizard pretended not to notice and slipped past the serving counter into the kitchen, where he found Elbur just emerging from his private rooms with a pale marquise sapphire. Vangerdahast plucked the stone from the innkeeper's hand, then stepped past into a cluttered study. He locked himself inside without so much as a 'thank-you.'

At first, the baying and scratching outside made it difficult for the wizard to concentrate. That problem was solved soon enough, after Vangerdahast sent a thought-message back to the palace. Within minutes, a special company of War Wizards began teleporting into the village, bringing with them a small detachment of Purple Dragons. The dragoners quickly chased most of the animals out of Torinville, allowing the men in the inn to return to their homes. Save for the occasional clank of armor or a whispered order, the streets fell silent. The children drifted off into deep slumbers, and their parents dozed uneasily in their chairs. The king's men stood vigil through the cold night, and when dawn arrived, the village over which it spread its golden light seemed as serene and peaceful as any other in the Storm Horns.

Tanalasta awoke from a long peaceful slumber and immediately knew something was wrong. There were no snores thundering through the thin walls, no still-drunk voices reverberating up the halls, no men cursing when they woke to discover their worldly possessions gone with the previous night's dancing partner. There was only sweet silence, something warm and furry purring beside her, and rays of dawn light streaming through half-open shutters.

Unwilling to end such a blissful rest, the princess rolled away from the light and felt the light touch of a gossamer nightgown gliding over her skin. She smiled. It was the first time in weeks she had not slept ready to spring out of bed, dagger in hand, at the first sharp sound. It was almost as though she were back in the palace, safe in her own chambers, with a full garrison Purple Dragons to guard her ... except that the palace smelled better—much better.

Tanalasta took a sniff of stale air and gagged on the stench of neglected cats. She opened her eyes and saw a dingy yellow bed canopy above her head, then looked to the side and found her cheek lying on a gray pillowslip crawling with fleas and lice. She cried out in alarm and hurled the covers aside, then jumped out of bed into a room full of cats. She looked down and discovered the 'gossamer' sleeping shift to be nothing more than the threadbare tatters of a linen nightgown, then it all came back to her: the animal attack in Condor Pass, the

retreat to the village, her job as barmaid, dancing on the table, and then ... nothing.

Tanalasta heard the cats lapping something on the other side of the bed. She circled around and found them swarming over a man curled in the corner, licking and pawing at the bloodied shreds of his clothes. The fellow's face was so bruised that it took a moment for her to recognize him as Henry, a strapping young farm lad whose bashfulness she had found rather endearing the previous night. He had two blackened and bloodshot eyes, a smashed-flat nose, and a pair of horribly split lips. His cheeks and neck were streaked crimson with deep lacerations, and there were little round wounds over his collar, shoulders, and all down his arms. Fighting the urge to gag, the princess shooed the cats away and started toward him.

"Please—I didn't mean to!" Henry buried his head in his arms and began to rock back and forth. "I beg you, just kill me and be done!"

"Kill you?" Tanalasta stopped, then turned her hands up and saw the blood crusts beneath her fingernails. "By the eye of the dragon!"

Tanalasta stared at her hands for a long time, trying to recall what she had done. The implications were obvious. There was blood under her fingernails and scratches all over his Henry's face. Those little round wounds looked like bite marks, and she had a foul coppery taste in her mouth ...

"By the purple dragon!" she cried.

Vangerdahast!"

Taking time only to yank her clothes from beneath the cats sleeping up on them, Tanalasta fled the room and ripped the filthy sleeping shift from her body, then rushed into the courtyard still tugging her blood-caked cloak over her head.

When she pushed her head through her collar, she found herself ringed by an entire company of Purple Dragons, with a dozen black-cloaked War Wizards to back them up. One of Vangerdahast's favorite assistants, a chubby-fingered sorcerer who styled himself Merula the Marvelous, stood in command. The Royal Magician himself hung propped between two burly villagers, his eyes closed and feet dragging.

"What happened?" Tanalasta gasped. "Did I ... I couldn't have hurt Vangerdahast!"

Merula cast a knowing glance at his fellows, then started cautiously forward. "What do you remember, Princess?"

"Nothing. I—"

A scabbard clanked against a cuisse, and Tanalasta turned to see two dragoners creeping up behind her.

She motioned them to halt. "Wait. There's no need—"

"We must be cautious, for your own protection," interrupted Merula. "I'm sure you understand."

"I do not understand!" Tanalasta looked back to see the portly wizard motioning his men forward again. "I am in perfect control of myself!"

But she wasn't. As the soldiers rushed her, something dark

***"Kill you?"
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fingernails.***

and bitter and familiar welled up inside, and she had the sensation again of being pushed aside in her own mind. Her vision darkened, and the sounds in the courtyard suddenly grew faint, and her body began to seem something outside her.

A chorus of yowling and caterwauling erupted from the house, and the old lady's cats came streaking out into the courtyard, screeching like banshees and swatting at the dragoners' armor. It was all the diversion Tanalasta—or the ghost possessing her—needed. She sprang forward, hurling herself into Merula, and then tore at the wizard's bushy-browed eyes, hissing and squalling like one of her cats.

Ever mindful of injuring the crown princess, Merula dutifully held his blows and called for help. A dragoner shook a calico off his ankle and pinned it beneath his boot, then hopped awkwardly forward, attempting to move to the War Wizard's aid without crushing the cat. Despite his caution, the cat screeched, and the princess cursed the soldier so obscenely she did not understand half of what she said. She felt the world slipping away.

"No!" Tanalasta stopped struggling against Merula, then closed her eyes and thought only of holding onto herself.

Slowly, she seemed to return to the center of her mind, and the sounds in the courtyard grew more distinct. The princess ignored them and continued to concentrate her thoughts within herself, silently calling Sorela's name, searching for the other presence she knew to be inside her.

An overwhelming despair came over the princess, and then Sorela was there, one with her and yet apart. Tanalasta felt the grief that had paralyzed the old woman after her husband died, and her embarrassment as she grew weaker and unable to keep up her house. Tanalasta felt the loneliness that had overwhelmed her when the villagers began to gossip about the smell and stopped visiting, and her hunger when people stopped leaving food at her gate, and then there had been only the cats—the cats who came and purred to her at night, who curled themselves around her aching legs and licked her clean when her old joints hurt too much to wash herself, who brought her little presents from the fields when she lost the strength—or perhaps merely the will—to scavenge for the stewpot herself. In the end, there had been only the cats, and now the village wanted to be rid of them, had called the king's guard to chase them into the mountains where they would be walking meals for any wolf or owl that happened to catch them napping.

Tanalasta stopped fighting against the old woman. *I won't let them. You know who I am. I will protect your friends.*

There was no answer, but the darkness stopped pushing at Tanalasta, and the princess was overcome by an eternal, unbearable sense of loneliness.

It needn't be, Tanalasta said. Your husband is waiting. You should be with him.

The loneliness did not fade. Tanalasta experienced an unrelenting sense of worry and distress, and the cats began to fill the courtyard with meowing.

They will be safe. Trust me; on my word as an Obarskyr heir, your friends will have a home.

The darkness subsided inside the princess's mind, but there remained an uneasy sense of apprehension and sadness. Tanalasta let the emotions wash over her, sensing that to do anything else would arouse Sorela's suspicions and draw her out again. She took a moment to compose herself and collect her thoughts, then opened her eyes and found Merula shoving a pale marquise sapphire into her face.

There was something bright and hot deep within the stone's heart, and Merula yelled, "Now, Vangerdahast!"

A twinkling red presence exploded into Tanalasta's mind and whirled briefly through her thoughts, then plummeted downward after the receding darkness. At first, she was too stunned and confused to grasp what was happening, but then the red light caught hold of the darkness, and she understood.

"No, Vangerdahast!" She pushed at the red presence, trying to force it out of her mind. "Stop! I command it!"

But the wizard did not obey. He caught hold of the darkness and, as she pushed him out of her mind, dragged it with him. Merula seemed to see the souls flashing in her pupils. He held the sapphire close to her eye and called to Vangerdahast, and then Tanalasta found herself lying on the ground, her limbs pinned by four burly dragoners and her gaze fixed on the blue sapphire in Merula's hand. There were two souls in it now, one bright and twinkling, one dark and swirling, and suddenly Tanalasta was alone—and lonely.

Merula pulled the gem away and retreated, leaving Tanalasta pinned to the ground.

"Let me up!" Tanalasta commanded. "If you harm Sorela, I swear you will be using your magic to keep High Horn free of cobwebs!"

The soldiers looked to Merula, who frowned in confusion and shook his head. "Obviously, the princess is still possessed." He nodded to the soldiers' lionar. "I shall have to sort this out in Suzail. We'll leave at once."

"Pardon me, but do you really think that wise?" asked Elbur. The innkeeper cast a meaningful glance toward Vangerdahast's body, now surrounded by purring cats, then pointed to a sapphire in Merula's hand. It contained only a single bright red twinkle. "It looks to me that the witch won the battle."

Merula's eyes grew as wide as coins. He turned to the lionar and gestured sharply at Vangerdahast's body. "Seize him!"

"Don't you dare!" Tanalasta yelled. When the lionar hesitated, she cast a warning glare at the soldiers still holding her by the arms. "You may unhand me now—unless you are determined to join Merula in High Horn."

The dragoners at her feet released her ankles, and the other two pulled her up. She pushed them away, then brushed herself off and turned to find Vangerdahast's body standing across from her. It was staring at her with eyes as dark as jet, and its teeth were savagely gnashing at the wizard's tongue.

Tanalasta turned to Merula. "You are no longer needed here."

You may take your company and leave."

Merula shook his head forcefully. "Princess, this is hardly a matter for one of your limited—"

"Last chance, Merula." Tanalasta did not look at the wizard as she spoke. "Defy me again, and you are no longer a War Wizard."

Merula started to stutter something foolish, then caught himself and bowed. "As you wish."

Tanalasta waited for the company to disappear down the village's winding streets, then glanced over at Vangerdahast's body. Though the ghost had stopped chewing the wizard's tongue, it would be some time before Vangerdahast could speak comfortably again. The princess thought she might like that.

Tanalasta turned back to Elbur and held out her hand.

"Thank you for holding onto the Royal Magician."

The innkeeper bowed, then handed over the gem. The princess went to Vangerdahast's body and pressed it into the ghost's hand.

"Milady!" gasped Elbur. "That stone contains your Uncle—er, the Royal Magician!"

"So it does. I would say Vangerdahast's fate lies in Sorela's hand." Tanalasta turned to the innkeeper, then added more ominously, "As does yours."

"And what of my son?" demanded Ash. "What about my poor Henry?"

Tanalasta saw Sorela's black eyes flash in fear and guessed why he had been singled out for torture. "Henry will recover," she said with a notable lack of sympathy. She gestured toward the bedroom window. "You'll find him inside."

Instead of showing relief, Ash's eyes only grew angrier. "Recover?" He stepped forward until he was standing toe-to-toe with Tanalasta. "What did you do to him? The royals are supposed to protect us!"

"As you protected Sorela?" Tanalasta did not retreat. "Can you tell me why these cats were an old woman's only friends in this village?" When Ash failed to answer, she pressed a finger to his chest and pushed. "Then you may step away. I have made my decision."

Ash's frown deepened. "This isn't right—"

"Ash!" Calder caught the big man by the elbow and pulled him away. "Do you still think you're talking to some serving wench?"

Ash's face paled, then he gave an awkward bow and went into the house, still angry, but now frightened as well.

Tanalasta started toward the gate.

Elbur and Calder eyed each other nervously, then Elbur asked, "But Highness, what are we to do about the ghost?"

Tanalasta paused at the gate and looked back into the courtyard. "I suspect you can solve your ghost problem if you'll show some compassion for an old woman's pets." She hardened her expression and glanced around the courtyard, making certain to make eye contact with every villager there. "Of course, that may be asking too much, considering how little charity you showed Sorela herself."

Elbur looked confused for a moment, then seemed to comprehend what Tanalasta was saying.

"You want us to keep the cats?" He sounded more stunned than uncooperative. "In our houses?"

Tanalasta gave the innkeeper an icy smile, then glanced at Vangerdahast's body. "I should think you'd want to make Sorela happy."

"And that is your solution?" Calder demanded, not quite indignant.

Tanalasta nodded. "It is."

The farmer scowled and started to object, but Elbur frowned at him and quickly shook his head.

"Better cats than ghosts," the innkeeper said. He squatted down and began to scratch Rochefort behind the ears. "I'll take this big yellow one . . . and that gray tabby over there . . . and perhaps that little orange and black girl . . ."

Calder and the other villagers stared at him in shock for a moment, then finally seemed to understand and began to make their own way through the courtyard, choosing their cats—or, more likely, letting the cats choose them.

Tanalasta watched until a sudden melancholy in Sorela's black eyes caught her attention. The ghost knelt and began to nuzzle the furry beasts, running Vangerdahast's chin along their backs and allowing them to drag their tails through his bushy beard. This continued until each one had come past and rubbed cheeks with the old wizard and gone off to join its new family. Sorela raised her dark eyes and locked gazes with Tanalasta, then opened the wizard's hand and let the sapphire roll free.

The red twinkle in its heart vanished, and Vangerdahast's eyes paled to their normal stormy gray. He scowled and wiped the cat-hair from his mouth, then frowned up at Tanalasta.

"And what would you have done if she hadn't released me?"

Tanalasta lifted her chin. "Let her keep you, I imagine. You did disobey me."

Vangerdahast's eyes flashed, though more with surprise than ire, and he snatched the sapphire off the ground. "I suppose you find that funny."

"Very," Tanalasta laughed. "Don't you?"

"Hardly." The wizard stood and slapped the pale sapphire into Elbur's hand, then joined Tanalasta at the gate. "Wait until we get to Skull Crag. I'll teach you what's funny."

"If you like, but not at Skull Crag. I'd like to learn something useful for a change." Tanalasta stepped out into the street, then said, "Our next stop will be Huthduth, I think."

"Huthduth? A house of ground-splitting spellbeggars?"

Vangerdahast raised his brow, betraying a cheerful blue twinkle he had no doubt meant to keep hidden from Tanalasta. "We'll see about that!"

"Yes." Tanalasta smiled. "We will."

*Troy Denning is the author of **Beyond the High Road**, a FORGOTTEN REALMS® novel introducing a new hero—and a hideous new threat—in the kingdom of Cormyr.*



Unleash the Beast Within Weremagic

When facing the furry,
make sure your wizard
packs some of these
shapechangers' spells.



by
Brian P. Hudson

illustrated by
Andrew Goldhawk

DEEP IN THE MIST-SHROUDED NIGHT, SORCEROUS things have been dabbling in the arcane, and a new kind of magic has formed. Crafted by unhuman creatures and made specifically for their use, this new magic helps enhance and assist werereatures of all kinds. It is called weremagic, and its use is quickly spreading.

Lycanthropes who practice the arcane arts are commonly called weremages. They are crafty and manipulative, the most intelligent and cunning of their kind; when werewolves attack a party of adventurers, the weremage is the one stalking the perimeter of the battle, ready to leap upon a fleeing enemy but primarily looking for the right moments to unleash his or her spells. The weremage prefers, whenever possible, to confer the benefits of his or her spells upon others, and if the enemy appears to be gaining the upper hand, the weremage is usually the first to flee. This should not be seen as cowardice, however; these creatures simply know when retreat is the best option.

The few good-aligned weremages—werebears and wereravens—are far different. Wereraven mages tend to be scholars and bookworms, highly knowledgeable in arcane lore but sorely lacking in battlefield technique. Werebear mages are powerful opponents; many of them are dual-classed warrior/mages who are equally adept with a blade or claw as they are with spells.

All weremages share one trait: They are secretive about the spells they wield. Weremagic is almost sacred to them, and a number of the spells would be decidedly dangerous to lycanthropes should

they fall into the wrong hands. Weremages never share the secrets of weremagic with non-lycanthropes, and many do not like sharing with lycanthropes outside of their own pack or community. Any weremage who sees a non-weremage casting a weremagic spell becomes enraged and likely attacks the spellcaster to the exclusion of others. Even the rare good-aligned weremages become furious at the sight of a non-lycanthrope wielding weremagic; while they are less likely to attack, the incident could make them hostile and uncooperative with the spellcaster and his or her companions.

The Tome of Thrush Palewing

Exactly who originated weremagic is uncertain. It is suspected that the first weremages were werewolves, possibly from the southern realm of Harmonia in the RAVENLOFT® setting—a rumor that would explain the harsh gutturals in the verbal components of the spells—but the first known weremage was Thrush Palewing, a quiet and unassuming wereraven who resided in the lost city of Il Aluk. Palewing's ample spellbook represented a lifetime of collecting weremagic, a lifetime that included trips throughout the Mists and even beyond them into

several of the known worlds. His intent was to curb the use of weremagic for evil. Unfortunately, Palewing's opus disappeared with the destruction of Il Aluk during the events of the Grim Harvest, and the spells within have since spread to distant lands and other, more dangerous weremages.

Palewing's spellbook is a heavy tome bound in tanned leather, fitted with a heavy latch that the wereraven usually kept enchanted with a ward against lockpicks that would cause the offending thief to *sleep* as per the 1st-level wizard spell. The pages are neither trapped nor warded, but the spells themselves represent an unusual turn for magic use. Spellcasting posed a problem for the first weremages, who had to learn to cast their spells with clawed hands and a mouthful of teeth, and thus modify their spells to suit their bestial forms. All of the spells collected in Palewing's spellbook were designed to be cast as such, and as a result, non-lycanthropes have difficulty casting weremagic spells. Any non-lycanthrope casting a weremagic spell must attempt to emulate the growling, snarling verbal and awkward somatic components of weremagic; the chance for success is only 75% per casting. Weremages never suffer this penalty, even in their humanoid forms, as it is assumed that a lycanthrope is familiar and comfortable enough with his or her hybrid form to produce the proper sounds and gestures without complication.

What follows are the spells found in Thrush Palewing's spellbook, as collected throughout his life. Whether there are other spells in the book, or indeed other weremagic spells not in the book, remains to be seen.

Instantaneous Shift

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V

Casting Time: 1

Duration: Immediate

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

Instantaneous shift lets a lycanthrope change from human to hybrid or beast form in one segment instead of 1 round,

with the additional benefit of being able to attack the round in which it shifts form. Only true lycanthropes can benefit from this spell.

Resist Silver

(Abjuration)

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 2

Duration: 1d6 turns

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the enchanted lycanthrope to resist damage from silver weapons. Affected lycanthropes are allowed a saving throw vs. poison each time they suffer damage from a silver weapon. Success means the target suffers only half damage from the blow. The bonus applies to normal silver weapons only; enchanted silver weapons are considered magical weapons first, and thus the lycanthrope suffers full damage.

The material component to this spell is a small piece of silver, which must be held in the palm and is consumed during casting.

Ripclaw

(Alteration)

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 3

Duration: 1d8 + 2 rounds

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None



This spell hardens and sharpens the claws of the affected lycanthrope, making them like razor-sharp blades and increasing claw damage by 1d8 points of damage per claw, per hit, for the duration of the spell. In addition, the claws are better able to tear through armor, and as such the lycanthrope gain a +2 bonus to hit with claw attacks. This spell can be cast on human hands as well, but the damage increases to only 1d6 points per hit, and there is no attack bonus.

The material component for this spell is a dagger made of steel or iron, which is not consumed in the casting.

Sabertooth

(Alteration)

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 4

Duration: 1d8 + 2 rounds

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

Similar to *ripclaw*, this spell sharpens the teeth of the affected lycanthrope, increasing the damage from its bite to 1d10 points per hit and granting a +2 bonus to hit with bite attacks. This spell can be cast on human teeth, but the result is only a +2 bonus to bite damage (normally 1d2 points of damage) and no attack bonus.

The material component for this spell is a chunk of obsidian, which is not consumed in the casting.

Scent

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 2

Duration: 1d4 turns

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

This spell can be cast on any Medium or Small creature. The affected creature emits a faint but distinct odor that is barely detectable to humanoid noses but sharp and clear to the powerful senses of most lycanthropes (and, indeed, many animals). This odor leaves a distinct trail that any lycanthrope or tracking animal can follow with minimal difficulty, for the odor

remains on grass, dirt, cobblestone, wood, metal, and any other solid surface. Should the affected creature cross water or ride in a carriage or on horseback, the odor remains in the air, albeit fainter—any creature tracking the scent has a 75% chance of following it. The spell's recipient emits the odor for the duration of the spell (1d4 turns), but the trail remains for hours after the spell is cast; normally, it loses 20% of its potency per hour (thus making it 20% harder to track—80% chance after 1 hour, 60% after 2 hours, and so on), until the odor becomes undetectable and the trail is lost.

The material component of this spell is a piece of pungent cheese. The piece must touch the target creature, requiring a successful attack roll, for the spell to work. The cheese is consumed in the casting.

Full Moon

(Enchantment)

Reversible

Level: 4

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Duration: 1d8 hours

Saving Throw: Neg.

This potent and dangerous spell temporarily causes an infected lycanthrope of any type to change into its lycanthrope form as if there were a full moon in the sky, regardless of the lunar cycle or time of day, for as long as the spell remains in effect. The spell can be cast at any time, and once cast it can be negated only by a successful *dispel magic* spell. A saving throw is allowed to fight the change. Thus, via this spell, an infected werewolf could convert to its man-beast form in full daylight or under a new moon. For this reason, many weremages enjoy casting this spell in the midst of battle, forcing injured and newly infected combatants to suddenly change form and turn on their companions.

The reversed form this spell is *new moon*, which subdues the were-form of an infected lycanthrope for as long as the spell remains in effect, regardless of the lunar cycle. This spell is popular with those infected by the curse and seeking a

cure. Likewise, it is the most common weremagic spell found in non-lycanthrope's spellbooks.

The material component of both forms of this spell is a sprig of belladonna. For *full moon*, the sprig must be shredded; for *new moon*, it must be consumed whole by the spellcaster during casting.

Howl

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 4

Range: Earshot

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 2

Duration: Immediate

Area of Effect: Personal

Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell allows a true or infected lycanthrope to let loose a piercing, bloodcurdling cry while in hybrid or beast form that strikes terror into the hearts of those who hear it. When a lycanthrope casts *howl*, it is immediately compelled to throw back its head and bay; the effect cannot be put off or subdued, although it can be magically silenced.

Any creature within hearing range of the howl must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or be gripped in magical *fear*, as per the 4th-level wizard spell. Victims of this effect most likely drop whatever they are holding and flee at maximum movement rate as far as they can or until the *fear* dissipates. Creatures of low or animal intelligence receive no saving throw; they immediately fall under the effects of the *fear*. Lycanthropes are immune to this effect.

In Ravenloft, this spell forces creatures who fail the saving throw to react as if they had failed a Fear check, with a result of either hide, flee, or faint (roll 1d6: 1–2 hide, 3–4 flee, 5–6 faint).

Increased Infection

(Necromancy)

Level: 4

Range: Personal

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 5

Duration: 1d6 turns

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

While this spell is in effect, the chances of the affected creature's transmitting

lycanthropy to an opponent doubles; every point of damage the lycanthrope deals has a 2% chance per point instead of the usual 1% chance of passing the disease along. (For werabats and wereravens, who naturally have a 2% chance, the probability doubles to 4%.) This applies to all forms of attack. In addition, creatures who would not normally transmit their curse with claw or bite attacks now do so, gaining a 1% chance of transmission per point of damage—this includes infected lycanthropes, who normally do not transmit their affliction at all. Werefoxes, who transmit their lycanthropy through a flat 50% system, are unaffected by this spell.

Pack Mind

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 5

Range: 1 mile

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 turn

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: 3 creatures + 1 creature per level

Saving Throw: None

When cast, this spell forges a link between three or more lycanthropes of the same type, uniting them into a "group mind" that heightens their abilities and allows them to act as a single unit. At least three lycanthropes are needed to properly cast the spell, with one creature acting as pack leader; this leader represents the "dominant" mind of the group. The weremage does not need to be the leader, although he or she must be a part of the pack for the duration of the spell. If the weremage leaves the pack or is slain, the spell is ended. If the number of pack members ever drops below three, the spell is ended as well.

Once cast, *pack mind* gives each member of the pack a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a -1 bonus to initiative for every three creatures united under the spell. (Thus, three pack members give a +1, six members gain a +2 bonus, and so on.) In addition, the chance of surprising the member of a pack decreases by one for every three pack members. The tracking ability of a pack increases as well; pack members can track as per the Tracking nonweapon proficiency with a score of

16, acquiring a +1 bonus per three pack members to a maximum of 19. In addition, all pack members know when one of their number is attacked or attacking.

The pack leader is an important part of the *pack mind*. At will, the pack leader can *command* any other pack member, as per the 1st-level priest spell. The pack leader can also allow more lycanthropes into the pack once the spell is cast, to a maximum of twenty creatures, some of which can be related animal types. For example, a pack of werewolves can have a number of normal wolves among its ranks, all of which count as pack members toward the maximum, and all of whom receive the benefits of being part of the pack. Since this pack leader is the lynchpin of the *pack mind*, its presence is essential to the enchantment; if the pack leader is killed or forcibly removed from the

pack mind through psionics or spells, the spell is broken immediately.

The material component for this spell is a length of chain, at least three links long—one link for each pack member at the time of casting. The item is not consumed in the casting and may be reused.

Invest Lycanthrope

(Alteration)

Level: 8

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Duration: 1 day

Area of Effect: 1 humanoid creature

Saving Throw: Special



This spell imbues a target creature with the shapechanging powers of a true lycanthrope for the duration of the spell. The spell must be cast on a humanoid who is susceptible to lycanthropy (for example, humans, dwarves, and halflings, but not a dragon or wolf). The target receives no saving throw to resist and receives all the benefits of the weremage's lycanthrope type, including the ability to change into a hybrid or animal form at will, the resistance to non-magical weapons while in the hybrid or animal forms (and thus the vulnerability to silver and other special weapons), and the ability to infect others with claw or bite attacks.

The affected humanoid retains the abilities for the entire duration of the spell, at the end of which he or she must

humanoid companions fight evil werebeasts. The final product of his work was an elaborately carved scroll case, warded with protective runes and containing seven tightly wrapped vellum pages, one for each of the spells listed below. The spells are not meant for reading aloud; instead, they act as spellbook pages and could be bound into a larger spellbook by a mage who knows how to do so properly.

Braeburn Ursine never destroyed the Tome of Thrush Palewing. On the night he was to do so, a group of werewolves led by a powerful weremage broke into his home and stole the tome. Ursine barely escaped the attack with his life. Although he spent his remaining years tracking the band across Ravenloft, he never recovered the tome.

Humanoids afflicted with lycanthropy do not gain the benefits of resist lycanthropy, and the spell does not cure them or prevent their transformation, even temporarily.

make a saving throw vs. spell. If the saving throw fails, the spell has infected the recipient with the *curse of lycanthropy*, as per the spell of the same name in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome. Should the affected creature be in hybrid or animal form when the spell's duration ends, the saving throw is made with a -6 penalty.

Only weremages can cast this spell. The material components are a few drops of blood taken from both the weremage and the target, which must be mixed in a small lead or pewter bowl during casting.

The Tome of Braeburn Ursine

Several times the Tome of Thrush Palewing has surfaced from the sea of rumor, once in the hands of the werebear mage Braeburn Ursine. Ursine was a powerful lawful good wizard who hated his evil werebeast brethren and saw the Tome of Thrush Palewing as a very dangerous item. His intent was to destroy the Tome, but first he undertook to study the spells within and to use the power of weremagic to craft some spells for his own use—spells that would help him and his

Silverblade

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 3

Duration: 4 rounds + 1 round/level

Area of Effect: 1 weapon

Saving Throw: None

This spell invests any metallic, non-magical weapon with the ability to strike lycanthropes as if it were made of silver. No actual physical change occurs. That is, one could not cast *silverblade* on a bone dagger and then pass it off as a silver dagger to an unsuspecting buyer. Neither does the spell confer any attack or damage bonus. Rather, the spell simply mimics the aura of silver, thus allowing the weapon to damage lycanthropes.

Weapons under the effect of a *silverblade* spell are not affected by a *resist silver* spell, so lycanthropes under such an enchantment feel the full effects of a *silverblade*.

The material component for this spell is one silver piece, which is consumed during casting.

Resist Lycanthropy

(Abjuration)

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 5

Duration: 1d4 + 1 rounds + 1 round/level

Area of Effect: 1 humanoid

Saving Throw: None

This spell was one of several spells crafted by Braeburn Ursine to aid his humanoid companions in the war against evil werecreatures. When cast, *resist lycanthropy* grants resistance to lycanthropic infection from claw or bite attacks to any humanoid not currently infected with it. Every time the target humanoid must roll for potential infection, he or she can make a saving throw vs. poison. Success means that the infection did not take—no percentile roll for potential infection is even required. In the case of werefox victims, the save is made immediately when the victim loses half of his or her hit points, with success indicating that the victim does not become a werefox. In addition, *resist lycanthropy* confers a +2 bonus to saving throws against the spell *curse of lycanthropy*.

Humanoids afflicted with lycanthropy do not gain the benefits of *resist lycanthropy*, and the spell does not cure them or prevent their transformation, even temporarily.

The material component for this spell is a any sort of silver brooch, ring, necklace, or charm, upon which the spell is actually "centered." Removal of the "center" negates the spell prematurely, both from the target and the item. The item is not consumed when the spell expires and may be reused.

Declaw

(Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 10

Duration: 1 round/level of caster

Area of Effect: 1 humanoid

Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell forces a physical transformation in the affected creature, temporarily depriving it of all claw attacks on its hands, feet, or paws. When the

spell is cast, the target makes a saving throw; failure indicates that all of the creature's claws, nails, or other natural ripping and tearing appendages vanish—not retract, but vanish—as if they had never been there. The affected limbs or digits are still fully functional, and the creature can use a weapon or bludgeon with its fists, but it gains no claw attacks until the spell is negated or expires.

This spell was designed to counter werebeasts, but various experiments have revealed that *declaw* works on any clawed mammal of size Medium or smaller, temporarily eliminating their claw attacks. The spell is not powerful enough to work on larger beings, and non-lycanthropic creatures with any amount of magic resistance are immune to the spell.

Lycanthropic Immunity

(Abjuration)

Level: 5

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Duration: 1 turn/level of caster

Area of Effect: 1 humanoid creature of Small or Medium size

Saving Throw: None

A more powerful form of *resist lycanthropy*, this spell grants the target a complete but temporary immunity to lycanthropic infection of any kind. The recipient must consume two sprigs of aconite while the spell is being cast; upon completion, the affected humanoid cannot contract lycanthropy from any claw or bite attacks for the duration of the spell, nor from damage caused by a were-

must sprinkle a handful of wolfsbane in a circle around the point where he or she stands. When the circle is complete, *wolfsbane* drives off all true lycanthropes within 30 feet of the caster, forcing them outside of the area of effect. Lycanthropes unable to flee the area experience pain, nausea, and sensory "blindness" until the spell expires or they manage to escape the spell's power, and their only actions can be to try to escape. Lycanthropes outside of the spell's range during casting cannot enter the area afterward without suffering the same effects. Infected lycanthropes in wereform are driven out in the same manner as true lycanthropes, while infected lycanthropes in humanoid forms experience discomfort and a -1 penalty to attack rolls, although they are not compelled

Braeburn Ursine never destroyed the Tome of Thrush Palewing. On the night he was to do so, a group of werewolves led by a powerful weremage broke into his home and stole it.

Hold Form

(Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 5

Duration: 1 turn/level of caster

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell inhibits the transformation of a lycanthrope, holding the target in whatever form it currently possesses—human, hybrid, or beast—for as long as the spell remains in effect. The spell affects any lycanthrope, true or infected, in any form, and can only affect one creature. The affected lycanthrope is not held as per a *hold person* spell and is free to move or fight; it simply cannot change into another form. The caster may dispel the *hold* at any time, and the creature is allowed a saving throw to break the *hold* at the time of casting.

The material component of this spell is a drop or two of glue, paste, or some other binding compound.

fox's or wererat's attack. In addition, recipients of *lycanthropic immunity* gain a strong resistance to the effects of a *curse of lycanthropy* spell; while the immunity is not enough to negate the curse, humanoid creatures of Small or Medium size receive a +8 to their saving throw against it.

Humanoids currently the victims of lycanthropy do not gain the benefits of this spell. It does not "wash" the infection from them, even temporarily, nor does it allow them to control or suppress their change.

Wolfsbane

(Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 5

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 8

Duration: 1d4 turns + 1 turn per level

Area of Effect: 30' radius circle

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to "turn" werecreatures in much the same way a priest turns undead. The spellcaster

to flee the circle. The area of effect does not move with the caster and remains constant for the duration of the spell, even if the caster leaves the circle. The circle does not prevent anything else from entering or leaving it, and anyone—including the affected lycanthropes—can hurl weapons or cast spells into it.

This spell is the only spell Braeburn Ursine crafted that cannot be cast by a weremage. Braeburn himself found this out the first time he cast it. Weremages attempting this spell become victims of a severe backlash: They are struck with pain, nausea, and sensory blindness for the duration of the spell and can perform no actions—including defending themselves—but no barrier is created, and no other weremages in the area are affected.

Brian P. Hudson lives in Mt. Pleasant, MI, with his wife, Robin, in a house that used to be a garage. Having lost his usual gaming group, Brian's spent the last few months as an RPGA® Network junkie.



Powerful & Unpredictable Potions

Limbo Draughts

When visiting
Lake Mosaic,
don't drink the
water.

Limbo draughts are rare magical potions derived from the primordial waters of Lake Mosaic on the plane of Limbo. Their powers transform the imbiber into unpredictable forms, as often helpful as distressing.

Limbo draughts are rarely found on the Prime Material Plane, and many alchemists consider the task of unlocking their mysteries a career challenge. Some have tried to single out one beneficial transformation from the wilder ones, but these attempts have always failed.

Drinking a *limbo draught* is a tricky proposition, especially since its duration can vary wildly. Since Lake Mosaic's potency constantly changes, the duration of the draught's effects are determined randomly:

1d4	Duration
1	1d12 rounds
2	1d10 turns
3	1d8 hours
4	1d6 days

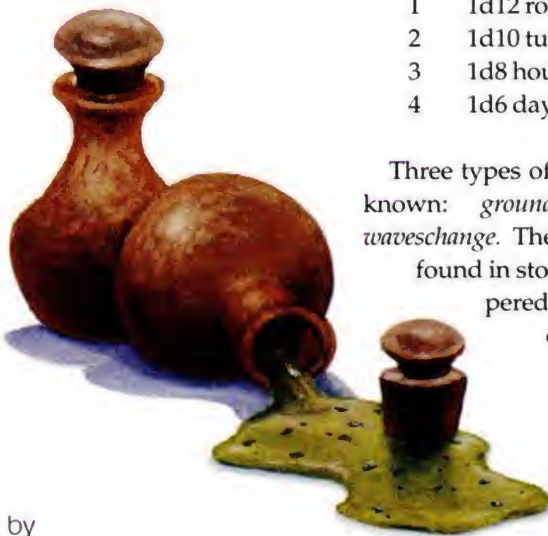
Three types of *limbo draughts* are well known: *groundshift*, *herbturn*, and *waveschange*. These potions are usually found in stoneware containers stoppered and sealed with wax to ensure that no precious drops leak out. If the finder is lucky, an inscription of a hill, a leaf, or a shell is painted on the bottle's glaze to identify which brew is inside.

Groundshift

This draught smells like newly turned soil and clumps of strange, earthy substances float within the brew. Drinking a *groundshift* potion provides the imbiber with the physical traits of creatures that live in the earth. Roll on the following table:

1d8 Result

- 1** Imbiber grows a long beard like a dwarf but also gains that race's underground senses regarding unsafe conditions.
- 2** The hands and feet of the drinker turn into large mole claws. He or she can dig through soft soil at a Movement rate of 6 and through hard earth or stone at a Movement rate of 3. In combat, these claws inflict 1–6 points of damage.
- 3** Drinker gains all the benefits from *meld with stone* spell.



by
Steve
Berman

illustrated by
John Matson

However, the imbiber's Dexterity drops to 6 for the duration of the potion.

4 The drinker's heart turns to living stone, leaving the character unemotional and changing his or her alignment to true neutral. Spells that cause an emotional effect, such as *fear* or *apathy*, do not affect the character. However, because of his or her new demeanor, the character loses any reaction roll or loyalty adjustments.

5 The drinker's entire body suddenly turns into a mass of earthworms. The character still retains his or her mental faculties and can burrow through the earth at half normal Movement Rate. The character cannot turn back to normal until the potion wears off. In this state, the character cannot be harmed except by attacks that affect a wide area.

6 The character's hands instantly petrify, stopped in whatever gesture they had the moment after downing the potion. For the duration, consider the drinker under the effect of a *fist of stone* spell. He or she is unable to manipulate or wield objects but gains the benefit of being immune to other petrification effects.

7 The drinker completely transforms into a pech, with all of that creature's abilities.

8 Roll twice, disregarding any further results of 8. The drinker initially takes the first form but, halfway through the draught's duration, transforms into the second shape.

Some mages have claimed that adding *groundshift* to the ingredients of a clay or stone golem allows the final construct to change its shape, perfectly mimicking any other stone statues within sight. Others tell of earth elementals drinking the potion and turning into steeds willing to serve other creatures.



Herbturn

This green potion deepens in color when exposed to sunlight. Small seeds and leaves swirl in the mixture, and it has a taste described as refreshing and minty. Drinking a *herbturn* potion transforms the imbiber into something verdant and plantlike. Roll on the following table:

1d8 Result

1 The character's flesh visibly hardens and turns to bark with the effects of a *barkskin* spell lasting for the duration of the draught.

2 All the drinker's hair becomes green leaves. As long as he or she has access to sunlight, the character need not eat—but must still drink.

3 The drinker's feet sink into the ground, becoming roots. The character's arms rise up to become branches, and by the following round he or she has become a tree native to the

current environment. The character remains sentient and aware but cannot take any action unless aided by magic. At the end of the duration, any poison or disease in the drinker's system, including magical curses such as lycanthropy or mummy rot, is eliminated. The drinker transforms into a dryad.

4 Around the character's neck grow fine, billowy shoots. His or her body begins to grow thinner and thinner, and his or her limbs atrophy until all that is left is a stalk attached to the head. Any breeze carries off the character, who weighs next to nothing now. Just before the *draught* wears off, the character touches ground and transforms back to his or her normal self, but by then the character might be miles away.

6 Large dark thorns sprout from the drinker's flesh, some nearly a foot long. These form a crude protection against anything attempting to devour the character or engage him or her in hand-to-hand combat. The thorns inflict 1–6 points of damage on those who touch the character.

7 After drinking the potion, one of the character's arms stretches out to become a tree branch. The limb is now useless, but at the end of the draught's duration a blossom appears on the branch and becomes an attractive fruit. Good characters who eat the fruit heal 1–6 points of damage; evil characters must make a saving throw vs. poison or die instantly; neutral characters receive 20% magic resistance.

8 Roll twice, disregarding any further results of 8. The drinker takes the first form but, halfway through the draught's duration, transforms into the second shape.

Druids have been known to go to great lengths to acquire an *herbturn* potion. They are reluctant to say why, but most assume they do so to abandon more of their animal nature and experience plant life for a short time.

Waveschange

This salty *draught* shifts from pale blue to aquamarine. It sparkles when poured from a container. Drinking a *waveschange* potion imparts to the imbiber some of the physical traits of creatures that dwell in the sea. Roll on the following table:

1d8 Result

1 On the following round, the drinker transforms into a triton or sahuagin depending on whether the character is good or evil. Neutral characters become merfolk.

2 The character's shadow seems to be the only thing affected by the potion. It stretches out and resembles a manta ray. The character can control the shadow, causing it to conceal the character (90% Hide in Shadows), or the character can ride the shadow like a *flying carpet* at a movement rate of 4 (E). Whenever the shadow touches the character, he or she becomes drenched with water, so this is not the thief's blessing it first appears to be.

3 The sides of the drinker's neck split open revealing new gills that allow him or her to breathe underwater. However, breathing air becomes uncomfortable, and the character suffers a –2 penalty to all attack and proficiency rolls while on the surface.

4 An imbibor wearing armor has the mail bond to his or her flesh as a great change occurs: Plate or banded mail darkens and makes the character appear more like a shellfish than a human or demihuman; chainmail turns into glimmering scales, giving the drinker a piscine look; leather armor bonds to become thick hide like that of a seal or walrus. The character's AC gains a –2 bonus beyond the effects of the armor. Unarmored drinkers ignore this result and roll again for a different transformation.

5 The drinker's legs twist together, melding until they form an eel-like tail tipped with a fin. The character's land-based Movement is lowered to 2, but his or her movement rate underwater doubles. The character can smack opponents with the muscular tail for 1–4 points of damage.

6 The drinker's hair turns into a fall of perpetually cascading water, frothy at the ends. This strange effect is just the outward sign of complete protection from fire, mundane or

magical. Unfortunately the character is also consumed by strong thirst and must seek out any drink possible every waking moment.

7 Both of the character's arms grow wet and stretch until they have transformed into suckered tentacles. The character can still clutch weapons and other objects, but fine manipulation is impossible. The tentacles are not strong enough to inflict any more damage than the character could with a normal punch, but they do reach out to 5 feet and provide a +4 bonus to all grappling maneuvers.

8 Roll twice, disregarding any further results of 8. The drinker takes the first form but, halfway through the draught's duration, transforms into the second shape.

Sea captains and rich merchants traveling the waters consider a *waveschange* potion quite the find, potentially far more effective in escaping a sinking ship than a potion of *water breathing*.

Side Effects of Limbo Draughts

Casting a *dispel magic* or *polymorph* spell on a creature under the effects of a *limbo draught* is not always successful. If the drinker fails a System Shock roll, he or she remains transformed by the potion. Drinkers with the natural ability to change shape (doppelgangers, druids, and lycanthropes, for instance) discover that they cannot "override" the effects of a *limbo draught*. The dweomer is too powerful, and shapechangers are as helpless as any other drinker.

On rare occasion, waters from the Striga Pool on the outer plane of Pandemonium are added to a *limbo draught*. In this case, the transformation is painful (inflicting 2–8 points of damage), and the end result is hideous—the DM should twist the appearance of the transformation with all due wicked imagination.

This article is Steve Berman's answer to a request for "a concrete article on chaos."

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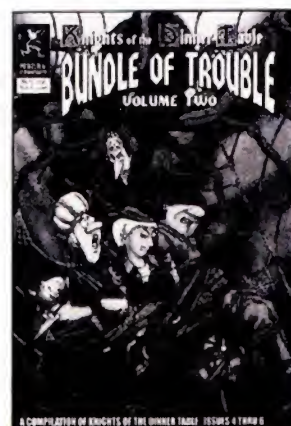
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Giant Lycanthropes


Bigger, badder, and
altogether more
brutal than
your garden
variety werewolf.

GIANT WERECREATURES have always been rumored to exist. The lycanthrope entry in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book states that “any humanoid injured but not actually killed” by a werecreature may contract lycanthropy. Giants, while much larger than standard humanoids, are still humanoid in form. Still, consider a few points before including giant werecreatures in your campaign.

First, weregiants are the rarest of the rare, and an encounter with one should be a well-planned, once-in-a-campaign event. Giant lycanthropes are extremely dangerous foes, but sending a 20'-tall werewolf crashing through the city of Greyhawk will evoke images of old rubber-suited monster movies, quickly ruining the mood. To avoid this mistake, place the weregiant at the end of a trail of clues—a giant footprint in the earth, the ruins of a small village, wild peasant rumors of 15'-tall bears and bats with a dragon's wingspans. When the PCs have everything from bugbears to a Tarrasque running through their heads, introduce the giant and let the terror begin.

Not all giants are susceptible to lycanthropy. While all types of giant share the humanoid physiology, giants with 15 or more Hit Dice are simply too resilient to succumb to lycanthropy; their size and constitutions are too powerful to fall under its influence. This automatically excludes most “true” giants, including the cloud, fire, mountain, reef, and storm varieties, and leaves for the most part those sometimes called the “giant-kin,”

the smaller giants that are closer to humanoid in shape, size, and type; this could account, in part, for their susceptibility to the curse. Certain of these are excluded from lycanthropy, and others are exempt only from certain kinds of lycanthropy. These exceptions are noted in the Lycanthropes, Giant, General entry.

The DM must remember always that with few exceptions, all weregiants are infected lycanthropes. Only two forms of true giant lycanthropes have developed. This means, among other things, that they cannot pass their affliction on to others, including PCs (though there's no need to tell them that), so weregiants have no control over their transformation; the giant is as much a victim of his curse as the PCs sent to take it down, a fact that could play an important part in roleplaying the adventure. 

Brian P. Hudson realizes this is his second article on lycanthropes this issue and swears it has nothing to do with his own full moon tendencies. Honest.



by
Brian P. Hudson

illustrated by
Scott Fisher

Lycanthrope, Weregiant, General

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	As giant type
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Full moon, and nights preceding and following it
DIET	As lycanthrope type
INTELLIGENCE	As giant type
TREASURE	As giant type
ALIGNMENT	As lycanthrope
NO. APPEARING	1
ARMOR CLASS	As lycanthrope
MOVEMENT	As giant type
HIT DICE	Either normal giant type Hit Dice or double the Hit Dice of lycanthrope type, whichever is greater.
THACO	As giant or lycanthrope, whichever is better, with a +1 bonus
NO. OF ATTACKS	As lycanthrope
DAMAGE/ATTACK	Double the damage of comparable lycanthrope attack
SPECIAL ATTACKS	As lycanthrope type
SPECIAL DEFENSES	As lycanthrope type
MAGIC RESISTANCE	As giant and lycanthrope types
SIZE	As giant type; some (10%) will experience a 20% reduction in size
MORALE	As lycanthrope type
XP VALUE	The value of the giant type, plus the value of the lycanthrope type

The statistics above refer to the giant werecreature in its "hybrid" form. While in giant form, giant werecreatures follow standard statistics for their giant type; when in animal form (where applicable), giant werecreatures follow all the rules for "Giant Mammals" listed under the "Mammals" entry in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome.

Giant lycanthropes are enlarged versions of their werecreature cousins, the result of an attack from a smaller lycanthrope type; they are typically "infected" or "cursed" lycanthropes, subject to the phases of the moon just as normal infected lycanthropes. Giant lycanthropes usually have some telling features (besides size) that mark them as members of a certain giant type; these are detailed below. Only certain giants—usually those designated "giant-kin," smaller and more humanoid—can contract lycanthropy; any giant with 15 or more Hit Dice is susceptible to it. Outside of this limitation, giant lycanthropes can entail a wide variety of combinations, from firbolg wererats to voadkyn seawolves and every combination in between; the various types are listed below, along with individual rules and restrictions.

Cyclops and Cyclopskin: The smaller cyclopskin are susceptible to all forms of lycanthropy, and their stats in werecreature form echo that of the lycanthrope type exactly. The larger cyclopes generally find themselves inflicted with either bear or



bat lycanthropy, because the caves in which they prefer to make their homes most commonly attract those creatures. Other types of lycanthropy are rare but possible; however, a cyclops cannot contract fox, tiger, or seawolf lycanthropy, nor any of the more exotic types. Cyclopskin or cyclopes in hybrid or animal forms are easy to identify because of the distinctive single eye, which they maintain in their transformed shape. This single eye does not hinder the hybrid or animal forms. In addition, a cyclops werebat cannot change into a giant animal form; it is limited to the hybrid form, and in this state it cannot fly; the cyclops still grows wings, however, and can glide through the air if it drops from a height.

Cyclops "communities" (such as they are) tend to drive out those afflicted with lycanthropy, since the creatures feed on the flocks cyclopes keep. Usually, giant werecreature cyclopes encountered by PCs represent such outcast creatures.

Desert: Desert giants already suffer under the burden of a curse, one that slowly turns them to stone. This curse apparently supercedes lycanthropy, making them immune to the affliction. Presumably, if a desert giant managed to break its curse, it might become susceptible to lycanthropy, though to which forms and to what degree remains unknown.

Ettin: Ettins can contract wolf, rat, or boar lycanthropy only, and they suffer from one restriction: They cannot assume a full animal form. This seems to be a result of their multiple heads; a

Lycanthrope, Weregiant, General

lycanthropic ettin retains its two heads in hybrid, which limits the change its body can make. These twin heads also make the lychanthropic ettin a true danger—an ettin werecreature with a bite attack gains two such attacks each round, each with the ability to pass on its dread affliction.

In some (10%), the lycanthropy affects one, but not both, of the ettin's heads. In these instances, the unaffected head (usually the "less dominant") loses control of its body to the affected head. It is often as afraid—if not more so—than those the affected ettin terrorizes.

Firbolg: The normally noble firbolg are especially susceptible to lycanthropy due in part to their extreme physical similarities to humans. Firbolg can contract nearly all possible forms of lycanthropy except raven, and they gain all the forms and abilities of the lycanthrope type. Infected firbolg are objects of extreme pity in firbolg communities; if an infected firbolg is discovered, the community will rally around the victim, pooling all their resources to seek out a cure.

Formorian: Formorian giants are a warped pastiche of body parts and body types. This condition apparently protects them from lycanthropy; no formorian has ever been known to contract the curse.

Fog: Fog giants have never been known to contract lycanthropy, possibly due to either their Huge (24'+) stature, their close relation to the immune cloud giants, or both. Whether it is possible for fog giants to contract the affliction remains to be determined.

Frost: The bitter lands the frost giants inhabit are hospitable to only two form of lycanthrope—bear and seawolf—and the frost giant is susceptible to both. A frost giant seawolf is a notoriously dangerous predator in the iceberg-filled waters of many northern realms, and most captains will go out of their way to assure they do not sail on the night of a full moon. Frost giant werebears change into a giant white polar bear. Frost giants are also one of two giant types known to have true lycanthropes among their ranks; these also shift only into the form of giant polar bears. (See the Lycanthrope, Giant Werebear entry.)

Hill: Hill giants are fully susceptible to most kinds of lycanthropy, excluding raven. Most commonly they contract wolf, boar, rat, or bat. Hill giant lycanthropes tend to be overly broad and awkward, and as such they suffer a -2 penalty to their movement rates in both hybrid and animal forms.

Jungle: The jungle giant is susceptible to any form of lycanthropy found within its environment, especially fox, tiger, and bat, as well as most feline forms of lycanthropy, like the wereleopard and werecheetah (both of which are detailed in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®: RAVENLOFT® III* Appendix). In fact, jungle giants afflicted with some form of feline lycanthropy should be considered only "Rare," in relation to all

other forms of lycanthropy, appearing twice as often in infected jungle giants as any other type. The jungle giant's unusually thin figure, while amply appropriate for the lithe feline forms it normally changes into, hinders its hybrid forms, causing a 2-Hit-Dice reduction to the hybrid form of all types of jungle giant werecreatures.

Stone: Though less than 15 Hit Dice, the stone giant is as solid and resilient as its namesake, and as such stone giants are immune to all forms of lycanthropy.

Verbeeg: The verbeeg, like the firbolg, are very human-like, and like the firbolg share their susceptibility to lycanthropy. Verbeeg, therefore, can fall prey to any form of lycanthropy, excluding raven. Verbeeg tend to react violently to infected lycanthropes among their ranks; where cyclopes tend to drive victims away and firbolg band together to seek a cure, verbeeg will actively seek out and destroy such creatures within their tribe.

Wood: The voadkyn, being related to elves, share the elves' susceptibility to all forms of lycanthropy. In addition, voadkyn are the only giants (besides frost giants) who share their ranks with true lycanthropes; these are the feared and hated shadkyn. (See the Lycanthrope, Giant Werebat entry.)

Combat: Generally, a giant lycanthrope will employ all the same methods of attack normal lycanthropes do, and causing double the damage. In addition to this, the giant lycanthrope's Large or Huge size allows it some additional forms of attack against Medium and Small creatures. One of these is a grabbing attack, which any Huge giant werecreature can employ against a size Small target. In lieu of a claw attack, the giant may attempt to grab a Small opponent for no damage, but with the option of biting the captured creature automatically the next round (no THAC0 roll required). Small creatures can break free of the grab with a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates check. Against Medium-sized creatures, the move can be employed, but the giant lycanthrope needs to grab the target creature with both hands to successfully bite the next round.

Curing Lycanthropy: All the normal means of curing lycanthropy apply to giants and giant-kin as well, though some things must be modified to account for the giant's size—specifically, a giant werecreature must eat a much larger amount of belladonna within 24 hours of contracting the disease to cure it than a normal humanoid would require. In addition, giants with 10 or more Hit Dice have a slim chance of "curing" themselves of lycanthropy during every full moon; as they feel the effects of the lycanthropy taking over their bodies, they can try to resist with a 5% chance of success. If a giant cures itself this way, it usually retains some small measure of the lycanthropy inside of it, manifesting in extra body hair or animalistic features—in effect, taking on a slight physical resemblance to the animal type, much like true lycanthropes.

Lycanthrope, Giant Werebear (Polarwere)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Arctic lands
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Nocturnal
DIET	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE	Low to average (5–10)
TREASURE	Z
ALIGNMENT	Neutral evil

NO. APPEARING	1
ARMOR CLASS	1
MOVEMENT	12
HIT DICE	14
THACO	6
NO. ATTACKS	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK	3–13/3–13/2–20
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Crush for 3–30; hug Large- or Huge-sized creatures for 4–16
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; impervious to cold.
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	H (21')
MORALE	Very Steady (13–14)
XP VALUE	8,400



Giant werebears are frost giants born with the ability to change into giant polar bears. Unlike their good-aligned lycanthrope cousins, polarweres are bitter, selfish creatures who care only for their next meal and a warm lair in which to sleep.

In giant form, the polarwere looks like a frost giant, albeit an especially broad-shouldered, hairy one. The polarwere rarely assumes this form, as frost giants are tribal and stand-offish. In ursine form, the polarwere resembles a giant polar bear, 10 feet tall at the shoulder and 20 feet tall when rearing on its hind legs.

Combat: Polarweres do not like combat and rarely attack unprovoked. When they fight—usually to feed—it is in bear form. Should a polarwere desire to fight in giant form, it usually wields weapons common to frost giants (throwing stones and battle-axes). In bear form, the polarwere attacks with two swiping claws and a devastating bite. Creatures of size Medium or smaller hit by the polarwere's claws must also roll a successful Dexterity check or be knocked down; creatures of size Medium or smaller bitten by the polarwere's bite must roll a Dexterity check at a –2 penalty or be snatched up in its jaws and crushed between its teeth every round thereafter for 3–30 points of damage. This attack requires saving throws vs. crushing blow for equipment and clothing. Unlike most lycanthropes, polarweres do not pass on their affliction to injured creatures unless the creature is a frost giant; frost giants suffer the normal 1% per hit point of damage chance of contracting the disease.

Polarweres share the typical lycanthropic immunities to normal weapons (in bear form only) and can be harmed only by silver or +1 or better magical weapons. Polarweres cannot summon normal bears like their smaller lycanthropic cousins, but

they do share the werebear's ability to heal at three times the normal human rate. Polarweres are impervious to all forms of cold. They revert to bear form at death.

Habitat/Society: Polarweres mingle briefly with the tribal societies of frost giants. Indeed, some have lived among frost giant tribes for years, but normally they are solitary. They prefer to find huge caves hidden in arctic mountain ranges, far from even frost giant settlements; they are happiest when the only other living things they see are the ones they are about to eat. Mating occurs on a haphazard basis, and only one young is ever produced from such an encounter. Females care for the young only until they can fend for themselves, at which time they either leave or are turned out by the mother.

Adventurers encountering polarweres can never be sure what to expect; the bear's reaction often depends on whether or not it is hungry, and whether or not the PCs look appetizing, but normally an unprovoked polarwere will not attack. A polarwere is extremely protective of its lair, however, and will chase invaders several miles across the arctic wastes if it catches them inside or nearby.

Ecology: Polarweres are at the top of their food chain. Their only natural enemies are the frost giants, who covet the huge pelts a dead polarwere provides, but a hungry polarwere will attack a frost giant if it is hungry enough. The land a polarwere hunts tend to be even more devoid of life than arctic areas normally are, as it takes a lot to fill a 21'-long bear; for this reason, polarwere territories tend to be many miles in radius, often taking the polarwere several days to roam them.

Lycanthrope, Giant Werebat (Shadkyn)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Hilly woodlands/caves
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Flock
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Nocturnal
DIET	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE	Average to very high (8–16)
TREASURE	D, U
ALIGNMENT	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING	1–4
ARMOR CLASS	5 (7 in bat form)
MOVEMENT	12, fly 15 (D)
HIT DICE	8+4
THACO	12
NO. ATTACKS	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK	2–8/2–8/3–12
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Sonic screech; –4 penalty to opponent's surprise rolls.
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Hit only by silver or +1 or better weapons; resist spells as elves.
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	L (9–10')
MORALE	Steady (1112)
XP VALUE	1,800

Shadkyn are the dark cousins to the good voadkyn, or wood giants. They are true lycanthropes who can change form at will into giant werebats.

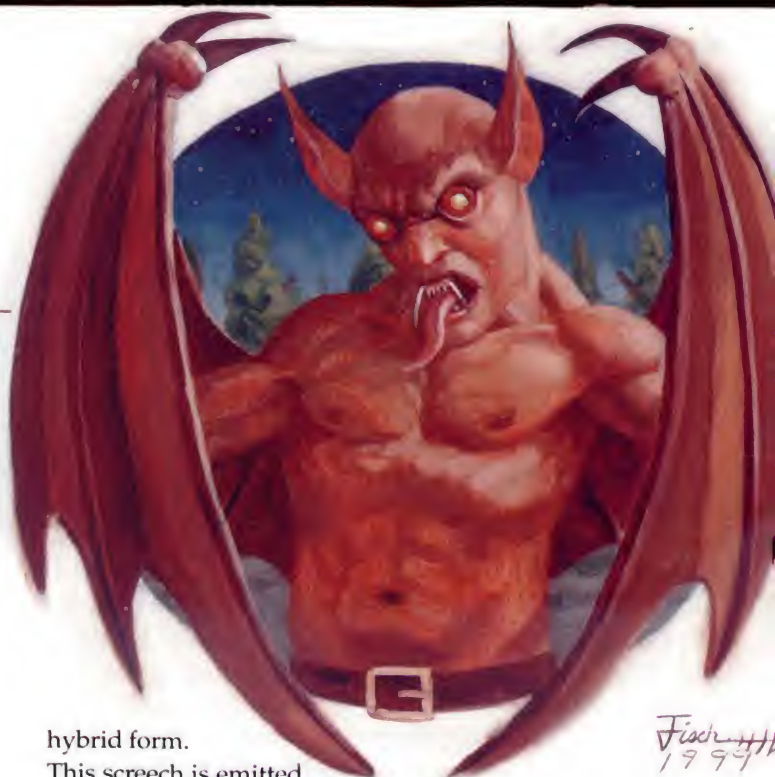
Shadkyn can assume three forms: voadkyn, mobat, and hybrid. In voadkyn form, they look like tall, thin, pale wood giants. They wear loose clothing that comes off quickly if they need to shift forms quickly. In mobat form, the shadkyn takes on all the attributes of the species, with the added benefits of 8 Hit Dice (instead of the usual 4–6) and a +2 bonus to the mobat's THACO. The shadkyn hybrid's flesh is a smoky color, with short black hairs sprouting on shoulders and legs; the arms elongate into giant wings, with a 12–16' wingspan. The hybrid form includes a pair of long, vampirish fangs.

All true shadkyn can take on all three forms. Infected shadkyn have a 75% chance to assume only two of the three forms—either humanoid and hybrid, or humanoid and mobat.

Combat: The shadkyn can fight in any of their three forms, though they prefer their hybrid form for battle. In giant form the shadkyn can fight with any weapon. They tend to tip their weapons with poison. In mobat form, the shadkyn fights as that species (see *MONSTROUS MANUAL* entry, Bat, Huge).

Their most vicious attacks come in their hybrid form, where shadkyn can utilize their elongated claws (2–8 points of damage per claw) or their bite (3–12 points of damage). Each point of damage brings the werebat's 2% chance of infecting the victim with lycanthropy; this applies to all humanoids, though the shadkyn prefer to infect voadkyn. Voadkyn infected in such a way become shadkyn; other humanoids become common werebats with the smoky coloration of the shadkyn.

Shadkyn can, once per turn, emit a piercing screech while in



hybrid form.

This screech is emitted at the beginning of the round and does not count as an attack. All those within hearing lose initiative for that round, allowing the shadkyn to attack first; in addition, all who hear the screech must roll a saving throw vs. breath weapon or be stunned for 1–4 rounds.

Habitat/Society: Shadkyn society is tribal. A typical group of shadkyn live in a mountain cave, with 1d12 + 3 males, twice as many females, and 2d6 children. One of these shadkyn lords over the flock in what can only be described as a despotic rulership; this shadkyn is bigger and more powerful than the others, fighting with a +1 to THACO and +2 to damage, and gaining 1 extra Hit Dice. The group lives only to breed and feed. There is a 60% chance that a flock of shadkyn includes 1–10 normal werebats who act as scouts and servants.

Shadkyn parents produce only one child per union. This child is always shadkyn, with a few (5%) being born without the ability to change into one of the three forms (most often that of the mobat), and a very few (2%) being born with no shape-shifting abilities at all; these shadkyn are usually turned out of the flock to become bitter recluses. A shadkyn mating with a voadkyn has a 50% chance of producing a shadkyn offspring; if the child is born voadkyn, there is another 50% chance the child will be an infected lycanthrope.

Ecology: Shadkyn fill a similar niche as their voadkyn cousins, although their lifestyle is not quite as sophisticated and their tastes run much more toward meat; cattle and other large herd animals are rare in areas near shadkyn lairs. The shadkyn have no natural enemies, other than the voadkyn, but their war is one of hatred, not survival. The only other enemy to shadkyn are other shadkyn, as they have been known to cannibalize weak or elderly members of the flock when food is scarce.

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The Ecology of the Xixchil Makeovers

In Refuge, Darter's Body Shop can provide an entirely new you.



by
Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by
Dave Dorman

DARTER REALIZED WITH A SHOCK THAT, SOON NOW, she would have to close her shop and mate. The xixchil stood slightly over five feet tall, appearing like a giant, light green praying mantis. As was the custom for her species, her exoskeleton was adorned with many personal modifications: a series of small gemstones she had painstakingly inlaid along her ventral surface, inducing exoskeletal growths to form the minute clasps that held the gems in the pattern of a constellation seen in the skies of her home planet; metal rings piercing the bony ridges along her spine, which tinkled and jingled when she walked quickly; and bands of intricate black tribal designs tattooed along the length of her jointed forearms and around her four long, lower legs.¹

She stood in the open area at the front of her shop—"Darter's Body Shop," the sign outside proclaimed in the common trade language—listening to a potential client. The shop, at first glance, looked like a simple tattoo parlor, a common sight in the shopping districts that catered to the sailors, marines, and mercenaries who traveled the vast seas of Wildspace. Sheets of tattoo designs adorned the walls, many of them intricate, demonstrating an attention to detail. However, also posted on the walls were numerous anatomical drawings of many of the major humanoid races—

humans, elves, hobgoblins, giff—each showing a similar attention to detail. A closer examination of these drawings would show many anatomical oddities: an extra limb growing from a human torso, complete with an ax-like weapon head at the tip, or a pair of seemingly organic smokepowder barrels extending forward from a giff's broad shoulders.

Mentally, Darter shook her head and scolded herself for her inattention. She had been fantasizing again, she realized, this time about her current customer, a shifty-looking, dark-haired human. He had entered her shop several minutes

1. The xixchil believe that the body is like a house, and that one must decorate it as much as possible to make it a true home. To that extent, they are constantly altering their appearance through surgery, a skill at which they excel. While body piercing and

tattooing are commonplace among xixchil, others even go so far as to create additional limbs or other appendages. The xixchil penchant for body alteration makes it easy for other species to tell individual xixchil apart.

ago and started asking about the prices for various body modifications. As he listed his reasons for needing a rush job, Darter's mind had started wandering, imagining how it would feel to grab the human in her strong forelimbs, deliver a quick bite to the back of his neck, and devour him slowly, bit by delicious bit.

Darter's fantasy was impractical. The moonbase on Refuge might have a reputation as one of the wilder places in Wildspace, but even the mysterious Arcane wouldn't appreciate their vendors killing off their customers. Not on a regular basis, anyway.

With a start, she realized that the customer had stopped talking and was looking at her quizzically. "Forgive me," she trilled;² "I was lost in thought. Perhaps we should go over your needs item by item." She racked her brain, trying to recall what he had been saying for the last few minutes. "Your main concern is being recognized," she said.

"Yeah, that's right," agreed her client, rubbing his unshaven chin with his hand and darting his eyes nervously at the shop's windows. "I got some people, you know, lookin' for me."

"You wish me to alter your appearance," reasoned Darter.

"Yeah. Can you do it?"

"Certainly," replied the xixchil. "How much do you wish to change?"

"Whaddaya mean?"

"We can change as much or as little of your body as you like.³ If you wish to keep costs down, we can simply change the color of your eyes, your hair, your skin. For a higher fee, we can alter the



bone structure in your face, shorten or lengthen your stature, add mass to your frame. Or, we could change your gender. You are male, correct?"

"Huh? Yeah, 'course I am."

"Well, then it's a simple matter of removing you—"

"No, no," the customer winced, raising his hands as if to ward off the xixchil, eyes fixed worriedly upon the sharp blades of Darter's wicked-looking forearms.⁴ "Nothin' like that," he amended, swallowing hard.

Darter cocked her head quizzically to

the side⁵ and stared at her customer, waiting.

The human licked his lips again nervously, then smiled. "Heh," he said. "That 'turn me into a girl' stuff, you was just jokin', wasn'tcha?"

Darter just stared impassively.⁶

The human cleared his throat and swallowed again, unsure of what to make of the giant insect. "I, uh, I think I'll just do that hair and eyes thing you said," he said.

Darter, motionless, stared at her client for a minute longer while he sweated

2. The xixchil language is a complex one, made up of equal parts spoken words and gestures, punctuated with sharp clicks of their mandibles. However, their complicated mouthparts also allow them to form the words of humanoid speech, and many xixchil have mastered several human tongues. When speaking, their voices have a nearly musical quality.

3. The xixchil are renowned for their surgical ability, and they are willing to perform their operations upon other races for a fee. The price, of course, depends upon the complexity of the operation, as does the required modification time. Examples of different surgical procedures and their standard price lists are detailed in the Appendix at the end of this article.

4. The xixchil is a mantoid race, similar in appearance to a giant praying mantis. Although common comparisons are made between the xixchil and thri-kreen species, the differences between the creatures outweigh the similarities.

To begin with, while each race is born with six limbs, the xixchil use their hindmost four limbs for walking whereas the thri-kreen balance on their rear-most two. Thri-kreen arms are basically humanoid in

structure; while definitely insectoid, they have only three segments: the upper and lower arms and the hand. The xixchil, on the other hand, have a total of five segments on their forward pair of limbs: the coxa (upper arm), trochanter (swiveling elbow-like section), femur, tibia, and tarsus (manipulative digits similar to fingers). The femur and tibia have the barbed, interlocking spines characteristic of the praying mantis, and it is this feature that draws the attention of anyone meeting a xixchil for the first time.

A xixchil's main attacks are made with its forearms. Each limb strikes out with blinding speed, inflicting 2d6 points of damage per hit. If it so chooses, the xixchil can capture prey if it hits with both forearms in a single round. Captured prey is impaled upon the interlocking spines (suffering a further 1d6 points of damage each round), and the xixchil then automatically strikes with its bite attack each round, inflicting a further 1d4 points of damage and forcing the victim to make a saving throw vs. poison or suffer the varying effects of xixchil saliva. Optionally, and less commonly, the xixchil can wield a weapon and inflict normal damage as per weapon type.

5. The xixchil, like the praying mantis, is one of

the few insect species that can move its head both up and down and side to side. It can even look over its own shoulder, a feat few insects can accomplish. This is an evolutionary necessity, for the insect cannot focus its multifaceted eyes; it suffers from a blurred sense of sight except at the center of its field of vision, where the level of detail it perceives is quite exceptional. Since its compound eyes are immobile, the xixchil can only focus on objects by aligning its head so the object is directly in its field of vision.

The ability to swivel its head is also tied to the xixchil's prowess in combat. Small hairs grow at the base of the creature's neck, which are bent when it turns its head. The movement of these hairs is tied directly into the xixchil's nervous system, directing the forelimbs' strike. Since the forelimb strikes occur in a matter of milliseconds, the xixchil relies upon the automatic "targeting system" provided by its neck hairs; the strikes take place far too quickly for the xixchil to direct course changes as the forearms lash out.

Xixchil must still roll for initiative in combat; even though their forelimb strikes occur with blinding speed, they must first "target" their opponents with their compound eyes, which takes time.

under her unblinking gaze. Then, snapping out of another daydream (this one involving biting the human in half along his midsection and dining upon his juicy entrails), she beckoned him wordlessly through a door at the rear of the shop.

The door led to a narrow corridor. Darter took the human to another door at the corridor's end. They passed several other doors along the way, each one housing a current "client." Darter's Body Shop was a well-known establishment on Refuge, and she kept herself busy with a steady stream of clients.

"Wait here," commanded the xixchil. "I will send in one of my surgeons."

"I thought you was gonna do it," said the client.

Darter stared at him impassively for several seconds, while thoughts of devouring him danced through her head. "I am not feeling well," she said finally.⁷ "You would be better served by one of my associates." And with that she left the human alone in the operating room, closing the door behind her.

She popped her head into one of the other operating rooms, seeing who was available. A gruff-looking dwarf lay battered and bleeding on a small table; hovering over him and stitching up the gashes on his back was Spike, a tan-colored xixchil whose three single ocelli remained black regardless of the time of day or the lighting conditions.⁸ "Bar-room brawl," Spike explained. He straightened up, body and antennae posture indicating inquisitiveness. "May I help you with something?" he asked.

"No, nothing," said Darter quickly, and left the room. Best not to spend too much time with a male, she thought, not when I'm this close to the mating phase. Her conscious mind knew that Spike was a skilled surgeon, one of the most

inventive on her staff, but at the moment she was afraid she'd think of him only as a convenient snack.

In the next room she met up with Wildflower, as extravagant a xixchil as Darter had ever met. Wildflower had successfully experimented with body pigmentation, growing her exoskeleton into wild shapes and colors until she looked like nothing so much as a mobile, bug-eyed orchid. Deep purples and violent pinks and magentas flowed seamlessly over her petal-shaped body contours. She was bent over a human woman, unconscious on a bench before her. Her bare back showed signs of recent modification: Darter recognized the beginnings of what would soon be wings being coaxed out of the woman's body by the delicate attentions of the wildly-colored xixchil surgeon.

"I must leave shortly," Darter said simply. "I will be gone for several days. Do you wish me to close up shop, or can you and Spiral handle things?"

"We can manage."

"Very well. There is a human male in Room Six who wishes a few facial alterations. He is in somewhat of a hurry; can you see that he is attended to?"

"Certainly. I'll ask Spiral to do him. Or she can take over here, and I'll see to him myself. Are you all right?"

"Yes, fine," Darter replied automatically, without thinking. She left the operating room and was already out the front door before she realized that she hadn't yet settled on a price for the human male's modifications. Oh well, they'll handle it, she thought, pushing herself through the throng of humanoids on the busy streets of Refuge, trying to make it to her destination before it was too late.

Refuge was a small moon in a crystal sphere near RealmSpace. Known primar-

ily for its Arcane shipbuilding and repair facilities, it also sported several advanced hospitals, a high-stakes casino, numerous banks, the safe-storage facility known as the Great Vault, and—best of all—a well-tended garden/park interspersed with various luxury homes.⁹

Darter ran through the park, enjoying the freedom of open spaces, the feeling of the wind whipping past her antennae.¹⁰ She had made it to the park just in time, too; making her way through the crowded streets of Refuge, it had taken all of her willpower not to strike out and eat one of the moon's many patrons. Especially with so many fat, juicy giff wandering about: She'd often wondered what it would be like to bite into one of the plump hippo-men and eat her fill. Now, though, she was safe in the park, and anyone foolish enough to approach a female xixchil in a wooded meadow during her mating phase was asking for what he got.

Darter didn't bother worrying about that now, though. Her rational thoughts were closing down, anyway, and she was becoming once again a creature of instinct. She was conscious only of her throbbing abdomen, her hunger, and her desire to mate.

She faced a grove of trees, back to the park entrance, and stood immobile, staring off at nothing in particular. Her forearms were spread wide in front of her, her posture signifying her entry into the mating phase to any eligible males that might pass by. Darter knew that she could remain perfectly motionless for hours if need be; she had done so on many occasions, hunting as a youngster.¹¹

Darter didn't have to wait for hours. Shortly after assuming her motionless stance in the park, another xixchil

6. Humans find it difficult to read a xixchil, as their hard exoskeleton prevents the sorts of facial expressions humans normally use to gauge a person's moods. In addition, the xixchil's compound eyes show no expression, so there's no information to be gained there, either. To make matters worse, xixchil do not betray their emotional states by their tone of voice; their musical voices remain steady no matter what their current feelings. (In the complex xixchil language, emotional states are usually expressed in gestures that humans find difficult to decipher.)

For the record, though, there's one constant a human can assume when dealing with xixchil: They aren't joking. Xixchil are practical creatures, devoid of what humans consider a sense of humor. This doesn't mean that they are sticks-in-the-mud

or are incapable of enjoying themselves; they just don't understand humor. Anyone trying to be funny with a xixchil is likely to get a blank stare in return.

7. While an intelligent race (with Intelligence ratings of 8–18), mantis biology runs strong in the xixchil, especially the females. When a female xixchil enters the mating phase (usually in the late fall), her rational side is slowly eclipsed by her animalistic side, as instinct overwhelms intellect.

Xixchil, like mantises, are amphigonic; they reproduce through fertilized eggs. Like a mantis, the female is likely to devour the male immediately after mating. This provides her with a ready source of protein after the male has fulfilled his role in the reproductive act (and is therefore expendable).

8. Xixchil have three simple eyes, called ocelli, spaced in a triangle on their foreheads. Each ocellus has but a single facet, and together they supplement the larger, compound eyes in response to light.

A xixchil's eyes change color depending upon the ambient light. During the day, they are a transparent yellow, light green, or tan, but at dusk or in low light they become a deep brown or glossy black.

9. Details on Refuge are taken from Ed Greenwood's "Rough Times on Refuge," published in *DRAGON Magazine* #159.

10. The xixchil's antennae are important sensory appendages. Through them, the creature both hears and smells, and they are frequently used in the gesturing inherent in the xixchil language.

entered. This one was identifiably male, and he crept slowly, cautiously behind Darter, careful to remain directly behind the larger female. He took nearly an hour to get within ten feet of her; then, without warning, he pounced.

Darter, her mind a small, insignificant thing in the back of her head, felt a set of legs land upon the small of her back, just below her wing case.¹³ Another set perched upon her lower abdomen, while the male's forearms wrapped around her upper torso, pinning her own arms. From such a position, she was unable to reach him and pull him off—which was exactly why he had landed as he did.

The next hour or so was a blur to Darter, as her mind shut down completely and she gave full sway to animal instinct. Only after the male had leapt away from her and fled at full speed did she feel the initial stirrings of her conscious mind return. Out of the corner of her compound eyes, she thought she recognized her fleeing suitor as Springblade,¹⁴ a young male who often served on a human whaleship. She hadn't been aware that the ship had docked at Refuge; it had been some time since she'd last seen him around the moonbase, and she had almost come to believe that the whaleship had met up with

some accident out in Wildspace. Such accidents were common in the depth of the flow. Watching Springblade's fleeing figure, one part of her mind—the animalistic one—regretted his escape and hungered for the taste of his flesh, while another noticed the bundle he had left at her feet.

Reaching down, Darter opened the crude burlap bag. Inside was a green-skinned goblin, muscles twitching at the end of xixchil-induced paralysis;¹⁵ no doubt a captured pirate, one of many who had tried unsuccessfully to raid Springblade's whaleship. How sweet of him, thought Darter, snatching up the helpless goblin and chomping hard on the back of its neck with her mandibles.¹⁶ He didn't have to do that.

Watching Springblade's fleeing figure, one part of her mind—the animalistic one—regretted his escape and hungered for the taste of his flesh.

Two days later, Darter was hanging upside-down¹⁷ on the trunk of a large tree. She had eaten several times in the last two days, catching various insects and small rodents in the park to supplement the goblin pirate Springblade had

provided. Now, her belly full and her abdomen swollen with eggs, she prepared herself for the egg-laying ordeal.

She began gyrating her abdomen in a slow circle, as if swaying to music only she could hear. Gradually, a white froth began oozing from the tip of her abdomen and adhering to the side of the tree. This creamy froth was soft now, but would soon harden to a bark-like consistency, protecting the numerous eggs within.¹⁸

The process took nearly three hours. At the end of it, Darter was exhausted, drained both mentally and physically. Coming out of the mating phase was always a grueling time. She was hungry again, and now, with instinct waning and intellect waxing, she worried about

how things had gone at the shop in her absence.

Climbing down from the tree on shaky legs, Darter headed wearily back toward the shop, thoughts of her egg-cluster the farthest things from her mind.¹⁹

11. Xixchil young hunt by stealth. Newly born, their exoskeletons are green or brown and do not sport the various gems and metallic implants added later in life. Remaining perfectly motionless, the young rely upon their coloration to blend into the natural environment and wait until prey comes within range. Then they strike out in a split second with their forearms, capturing prey and devouring it alive.

12. Male xixchil are smaller than the females, with thinner abdomens (especially during the female's mating cycle, when her abdomen swells with eggs). Males also tend to be drabber in color, leaning toward the tans and muddy-browns, while the females are usually olive or pale green.

13. Like mantises, both sexes have wings, although their greater weight due to their increased size prevents them from achieving sustained flight. While the female xixchil's wings are purely ornamental, the male sports a somewhat larger pair of wings that enable him to slow a fall as per the *feather fall* spell.

Of course, given the xixchil's penchant for body modification, many individual xixchil have taken it upon themselves to "fix" this flaw in their natures, redesigning their wings to enable sustained flight. Such individuals generally fly at a rate of 18 with a maneuverability class of D.

14. Xixchil name themselves at adulthood, usually after their most prominent body modification. Darter named herself after the dart launchers she incorporated into her forearms; Springblade similarly created hollow tubes along the tops of his tibia, inside which he placed retractable sword-blades. As a xixchil's personal body modification is always an ongoing affair, they often change their names several times over the course of their lifetimes.

15. Xixchil have an innate talent for creating specific poisons from their saliva. A xixchil need only taste an individual (or an object in recent contact with that individual) to synthesize a salivary compound that anesthetizes that particular individual. The compound is either delivered by bite or introduced into the victim's food or drink. The anesthetic renders the victim unconscious for the duration of the required body-altering operation.

Optionally, xixchil can create deadly poisons from their saliva. These poisons are just as individual-specific, brewed in 1 round after "tasting" the victim. They can be delivered by bite, or spit onto the xixchil's finger blades or a favored weapon and injected into the victim in that manner. In any case, the victim must make a saving throw vs. poison (at a -4 penalty due to the tailored brew) or either die or become paralyzed within 1 round, depending upon the saliva's properties. Paralysis generally lasts about an hour. Xixchil salivary poisons must be used within 10 turns before they break down and become inert.

16. The "neck-chomp" is the xixchil's favorite form of execution. Their powerful mandibles are strong enough to pierce even the hardest insect exoskeleton and can easily bite their way through solid bone as well.

After devouring a meal (all edible portions are consumed, leaving only the bones), a xixchil washes itself with its tongue like a cat. First it cleans its forearms, then its face, and finally its antennae, all with fastidious attention to detail.

17. Like many insects, xixchil can walk along vertical surfaces at their normal movement rate.

18. A female xixchil lays 10d10 eggs embedded in the frothy, white ootheca, or egg sac. The froth is filled with air bubbles, insulating the eggs from cold temperatures. Each egg is in a separate chamber

within the ootheca, so that when the newborn xixchil hatch, they cannot devour the other eggs. (Although they habitually devour each other after being born, at least this gives each newborn a fighting chance: They get to hatch before having to battle for their lives.)

19. Xixchil mothers abandon their eggs after laying them, leaving the young to fend for themselves for the first few years of life. The eggs usually hatch in the early spring, at which time the newborns have a shiny, nearly transparent exoskeleton, and stand around a foot in length. About an hour after birth, the xixchil's exoskeletons have hardened, and the newborns fight each other to the death, feasting upon their slain siblings. This continues for the first few weeks of life, after which time their cannibalistic tendencies fade (with the exception of the females, who often resort to post-coital cannibalism immediately after mating).

For the first few years of life, each xixchil must be self-sufficient, surviving on its own at basically an animal level of intelligence. During this time, it molts every month or so, growing in size with each molt until it reaches about 4 feet high. At this time, it is re-entered into xixchil society by means of adoption: An adult xixchil (of either sex) approaches the near-adult, teaches it the xixchil language (much of which is based upon instinctive gestures, and is thus easy for the young to learn), customs, and surgical skills necessary for its adult life.

Although rare, there have been occasions where the feral young withdraws from the adult's initial approach, preferring the life of a wild animal to that of civilization. These feral xixchil often grow to be quite large, sometimes reaching a length of 7 feet or more. It is not considered polite in xixchil society to mention these animalistic aberrations.

Spiral—so named because of the black spirals tattooed all over her exoskeleton²⁰—was Darter's adopted daughter and second-in-command when it came to the running of her shop. She went over the status of the clients that had been attended to in Darter's absence. Spiral's pet fluttercat, Fluffy, rubbed against her leg for attention but was ignored.²¹

"The human male decided on blue eyes and blond hair. I altered its length, as well and gave him a permanent bald spot. He grumbled a bit about the bald spot but left happy."

"He paid in full?"

"Yes, in coins."

Darter chuffed disappointment, but said nothing.²²

"Morningstar came in yesterday," Spiral added. "He was very impressed with his new weapon arm and wants another just like it for his left side."

"Did you contact the smith who forged his first weapon-head?"

"Yes, I sent word; he's already begun work on it and will contact us when it's ready."²³

"Good," said Darter, mentally making notes about Morningstar's exoskeleton and how best to chew through his toughened armor in order to stimulate the growth of a new appendage. The process was not difficult, but it took time and precision.

"What about the human female who wanted wings?"

"She's still unconscious in Room Four. The wings are coming along fine, and Wildflower's already started hollowing out her bones. She should be ready in another three days or so."

"Did you find out what a 'sylph' was?"

"No, why?"

"She had said something about wanting to 'look like a sylph' when she flew."

"Well, no doubt she will; how many viable forms of flying mammals can there be? I'm sure a sylph looks very much like a bat, so we needn't worry. We even went out of our way to ensure the fur on her wings matches her hair color."


"Mmmm," murmured Darter, unconvinced. "You never know with these humans. They always seem to find something to complain about, no matter how trivial.²⁴ Anything else I should know?"

"Not much. A couple of dwarven mercenaries came in wanting matching tattoos. Nothing difficult, just crossed axes, dripping with blood. That rich woman who lives in the tall mansion came in, wanted violet eyes to match her dress for a party this weekend. A possible commission for a fluttercat or two; a young woman was in who fell immediately in love with Fluffy, but her mate said they'd have to think about it. That's about it."

"Good," said Darter, pleased to be back in the swing of things now that her

annual mating phase was over. "I've been thinking about that woman with the wings. I think we should consider modifying her digestive system as well. She'll need to eat more as a flyer; no doubt she'll want to be able to catch and eat insects on the wing. We should think about expanding her stomach capacity, perhaps add a few extra digestive enzymes. What do you think?"

"Hmmm," said Spiral. "I've already had Wildflower start on increasing the woman's lung size. I suppose we could remove her appendix, possibly rearrange a few of her internal organs. That might give us the room we need." Talking over the possibilities, the two xixchil disappeared down the hallway at the rear of Darter's Body Shop.

Their paralyzed client in Room Four, meanwhile, stared sightlessly at the walls. Her batlike wings were still short and stumpy, but already the network of thick veins that would soon cover their surface could be seen, bulging out between the mats of golden-blond fur. The wings waved feebly, stirring the air as the woman dreamed her dreams of flitting through the clouds, sylph-like, on gossamer wings. 

This has been the Year of the Bug for Johnathan M. Richards, who examined both the aspis and the xixchil in "Dragon Ecology" articles.

20. The xixchil's ability to swivel its head almost completely around, coupled with the ball-and-socket joint at the "elbow" (actually, trochanter) that allows a wide amount of movement, permits the xixchil to reach just about anywhere on its body with the dexterous tarsal digits on its hands. This means that most body modifications can be performed by themselves, and as these modifications are primarily expressions of individuality, most xixchil prefer to perform their own alterations. In places where it is difficult to reach or get a good look at (like on the top of one's own head), a xixchil might ask the assistance of another of its race. Whenever possible, however, the xixchil performs all work on itself.

Tattoos are perhaps the most common type of xixchil body modification, especially among the young. The reason for this is simple: As the xixchil molt, they lose the tattoos on their "old" skin, and can start afresh with new designs. This allows the young xixchil to "practice" their tattooing skills on themselves several times before their final molt, when any tattooing becomes permanent.

21. Xixchil carry their love of body modification to lower animal and plant life, creating all kinds of exotic creatures, including winged cats, blooming birds, and so on. These odd creatures not only allow the xixchil an opportunity to practice their modification skills (and experiment to devise new types of alteration), but are also an additional source of income: They are often sold to rich merchants who desire an unusual pet.

The main type of xixchil spelljamming vessel is itself an offshoot of the xixchil love for species alteration. Called a scalpel ship, the vessel is an enormous, modified form of plant life, whose intricately sculpted features rival even the most delicate of elven ships. Scalpel ships feature long, thin, flowing sails (modified leaves) and numerous sharp protrusions (the "scalpels" that give the ship its name; in reality, specially-modified thorns) that can be used defensively against other ships. Details on the scalpel ship and its standard crew are provided on page 40 of the Ship Recognition Manual from the *War Captain's Companion SPELLJAMMER* accessory.

22. Xixchil understand the value of money as a means to purchase goods, but they prefer to deal with items they can use as-is. A ruby can be immediately added to the xixchil's exoskeleton, whereas the same value in gold coins must be exchanged for gemstones or melted down and shaped into an ornament to be worn, usually pierced through some part of the xixchil's exoskeleton. Xixchil typically have treasure type W, most of which has been somehow incorporated into the creatures' specific exoskeletal modifications.

23. Some xixchil hire themselves out as bodyguards, mercenaries, or assassins. These beings often purchase extensive modification, including extra specialized limbs in the form of maces, swords, or other weapons, increased speed, enhanced strength, or tougher, thicker exoskeleton armor. Known as battle-hardened xixchil, these brutes often sport as

many as six attacks per round with their weapon-limbs and can reach AC -4!

Because battle-hardened xixchil tend not to be the most intelligent members of their race, they usually have their combat modifications done by other, more skilled xixchil. The xixchil surgeons, due to their unique digestive processes that work at the cellular level, can easily strengthen the exoskeleton, stimulate new limb growth, and so on. The "weapon" portion of a combat limb is usually made expressly for the new appendage, although existing (nonmagical) weapons can be used in a pinch. The xixchil are elaborate craftsmen in their own right, but they occasionally "subcontract" weapon production to skilled weaponsmiths of other races (especially dwarves).

24. Extreme care must be made when dealing with a xixchil surgeon, for the mantoids are practical to a fault. "Form follows function" is a famed xixchil aphorism; they care nothing for human aesthetics. A human asking for superhuman strength (and proving his ability to pay up front!) is likely to have bulging muscles attached from his arms and anchored to the sides of his head. Sure, he'll be strong, but he's not likely to think it was worth the price. Similarly, the woman desiring wings failed to specify her desired appearance after the alteration and didn't bother getting details about the end result; she'll no doubt be very surprised to find herself looking more like a werebat than a sylph.

APPENDIX

Body Modifications

PCs looking to have alterations or additions made to their bodies, and who are willing to take a chance on xixchil aesthetics, might well find themselves in Darter's Body Shop or a similar xixchil-run establishment. The DM will need a price guide for the types of body modification likely to be offered.

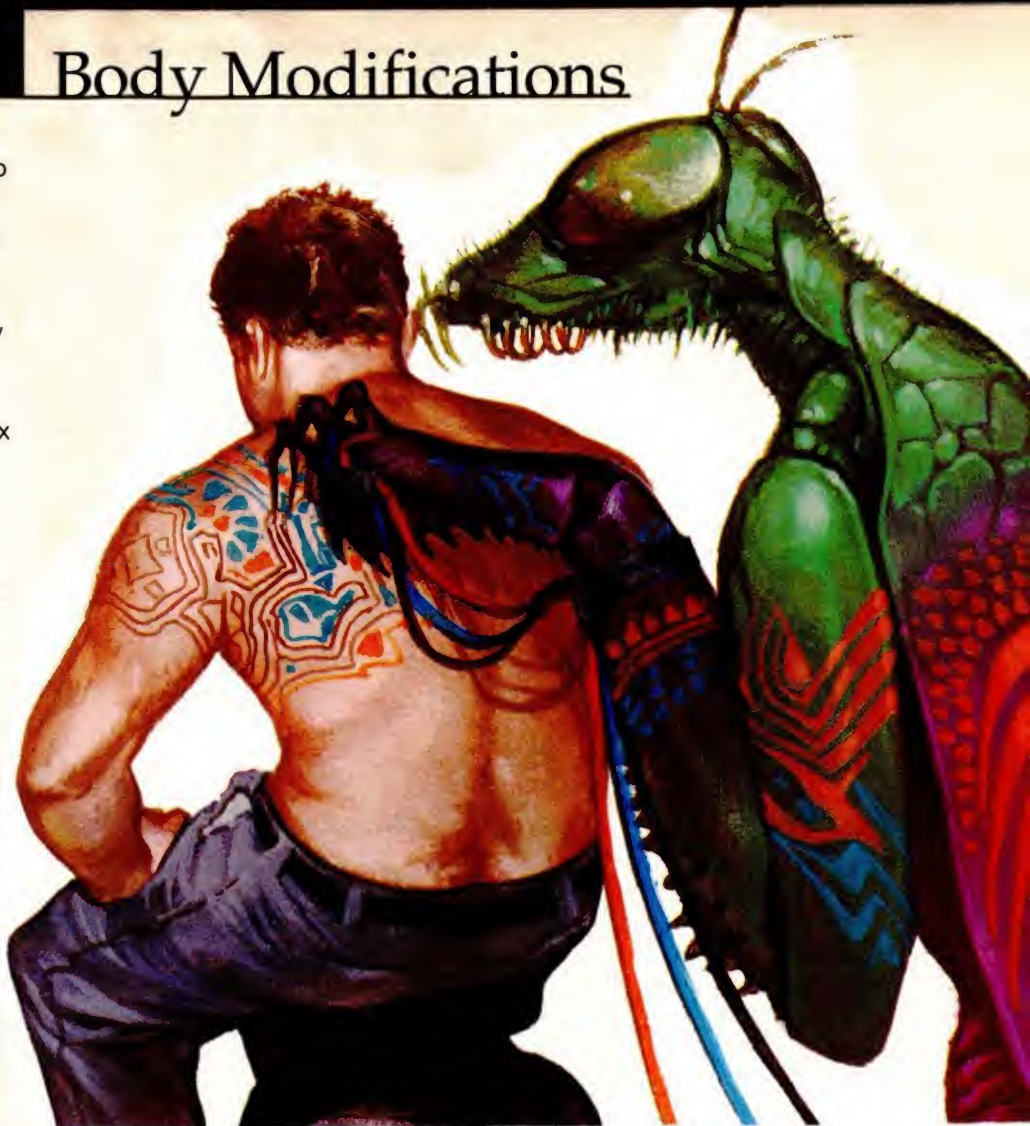
The "Xixchil" entry in *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*® 9: *SPELLJAMMER*® Appendix states that xixchil surgeons generally charge $2d10 \times 100$ gp per change, depending upon the extent and complexity of each operation. These prices are apt to be somewhat different between individual xixchil; as in all purchases, shopping around for the best deals is advised.

Xixchil, being rather straightforward and logical, do not like to haggle over the prices for their services. Once a price has been quoted by the surgeon, that's usually the last word on the subject, and clients looking for a better price are asked to take their business elsewhere. The one exception to this is in the type of payment provided; as xixchil are fond of gemstones (since they can be incorporated into their elaborate exoskeletal modifications), they will often accept a smaller amount of money for an operation in well-cut gemstones than they will in gold.

The following are some of the body modifications the xixchil commonly perform for paying clients:

Tattoos

By far the most common type of xixchil-provided body alteration service, xixchil tattoos have become the standard across Wildspace due to their intricate attention to detail. As might be expected, the size and level of detail of the tattoo have a direct bearing on the cost, but as a good rule of thumb, xixchil tattoo artists generally charge about 50 gp per square inch for a detailed design. Of course, single-color geometric designs (stripes, bands, spirals, alternating triangles, and so on) cost significantly less; often a client can get an entire strip of a simple design across his or her arm for about 50 gp.



Body Piercing

This simple procedure is embraced by many races (although to much different extents). The xixchil charge a standard fee for piercing, regardless of location, but they charge for each individual hole. Xixchil have no qualms against piercing eyebrows, noses, lips, tongues, or whatever; each piercing still costs the same fee. A woman looking to get her ears pierced must pay for each lobe; the fee is usually only 5 gp or so, but this doesn't include the jewelry, only the piercing. Many xixchil surgeons are also fine artisans by their own rights, and they offer jewelry for sale at their shops.

Change in Eye Color

This is a simple procedure, involving an exchange of pigment extracted from an eye of the appropriate color. Xixchil often keep several "stock" eyes from

various humanoid species on hand for these operations. Eye color change has no effect on the client's visual acuity; a client will not gain infravision by switching to an elf's eye color. The price is 200 gp for a "standard" eye color (the normal range of humans, elves, dwarves, and the like), and up to 500 gp for more exotic colors (like the lavender eyes of a drow).

Change in Skin Color

Skin color change is not attained through grafting, but rather through alteration of the pigmentation-producing glands in the client's body. Skin can be made lighter or darker through the range normal to the client's species; a human could not be made bright orange or lime green, for example. The standard fee for this operation is a flat 500 gp, and the effects occur naturally over the course of a week or so.

Change in Hair Color

This is not a simple dye job, but a permanent change to the client's hair color (subject to the effects of aging, of course). For example, a dark-haired woman could become a blonde, but her hair would naturally turn white or gray as she got older. Xixchil usually charge 300 gp for a simple hair job, or up to 600 gp for a "restoration"—getting an elderly client's or white hair to return to its natural color. Restorations last only a matter of months, and subsequent restorations run the risk of hair loss. Nonetheless, they are popular among the vain who wish to deny their true age.

Height Change

Height change is a tricky operation, as it includes either shortening the bones in the legs or stimulating growth in the leg bones. Shortening is achieved through amputation, bone reduction, and reattachment; lengthening is performed through chemicals that stimulate bone growth. Becoming taller is far less dangerous and therefore cheaper; becoming shorter is much more difficult and therefore more costly. The price varies depending upon the overall desired change of height, as shown on **Table 1**.

Remember that human aesthetics are of no concern to the xixchil. A human thief desiring a height change of 6 inches as part of a disguise to hide himself from his enemies had better make it clear to the xixchil surgeon that he wants the height difference spread out over his legs, or he's likely to lose all 6 inches from his shins, making him quite an odd-looking specimen. Similarly, a height change is generally made in the legs only; while an inch or two may not make that much of a difference, someone losing 6 inches will probably want their arms shortened a similar amount, lest they develop an "arm-dragging simian" appearance. Xixchil surgeons generally charge the same amount for arm shortening/lengthening as they do for work on the legs.

Extra Weight

This is a simple process performed by adding layers of fat under the skin. It is generally only done as part of a disguise, when the client needs to drastically alter his or her appearance. The standard fee

**Table 1:
Height Change Costs and Results**

Height Change	Taller	Shorter
1"	400 gp	1,000 gp
2"	600 gp	1,200 gp
3"	800 gp	1,400 gp
4"	1,000 gp	1,600 gp
5"	1,200 gp	1,800 gp
6"	1,400 gp	2,000 gp

is 50 gp per additional 20 pounds of weight. Clients usually find the procedure easier to deal with if they don't ask the xixchil surgeons where the extra fat comes from.

Weight Removal

Far more common than adding extra weight, the weight removal operation is somewhat similar to today's liposuction procedures. While occasionally performed for a client trying to alter his or her appearance to hide from enemies, the more common reason is simple vanity. Realizing the profits to be made from this simple procedure, most xixchil charge anywhere from 10–20 gp per pound of weight removed.

Gender Change

The xixchil gender-change operation involves changes to the client's chromosomal pattern, administered through the xixchil's saliva. The process takes a full week, during which time the patient is kept sedated and paralyzed. Although not a magical process in itself, the gender change can reverse magical changes of sex such as those brought about by a *girdle of masculinity/femininity* or a magical curse. It should be noted that there isn't much a xixchil can do about a victim being turned neuter as a result of overuse of *girdles of masculinity/femininity*. The standard cost for such an operation is 2,000 gp.

Facial Structure Change

This delicate operation involves changing the structure of the face itself: altering cheekbones, redesigning a nose, widening or narrowing lips, and so on. While the cost of the operation depends on the amount of facial "shuffling" involved, most of these operations run in the 1,000

to 1,500 gp range. This is a popular operation among rogues and assassins who often have dangerous enemies looking for them. Xixchil surgeons generally do not have the skill necessary to make a client look like a particular individual; spies and assassins looking to impersonate a specific person would do better resorting to makeup or magic.

This operation is frequently used in conjunction with the gender change; after all, the gender change makes the client a member of the opposite sex, but not necessarily a good-looking member of the opposite sex. Newly created females might still have a masculine jawline; new males might still have the full lips of a woman. The facial structure change fixes little details like that.

Increased Strength

Many clients, especially those of a warrior bent, enter a xixchil shop looking for a quick way to become stronger. The xixchil are happy to oblige by adding muscle tissue. (Again, it's best for the squeamish not to ask where the xixchil obtain this.) Of course, when a xixchil grafts muscle tissue into place, it isn't always the most pleasant outcome: The client might be physically stronger, but he or she is apt to look abnormal (muscles in the wrong places, or not balanced). It's definitely easy to tell just by looking who earned their muscles the old-fashioned way and who plunked down a bag of gold at a xixchil shop. Nonetheless, for those interested only in the end result and not the aesthetics involved, the price for enhanced musculature is about 750 gp per additional point of Strength until 18, then 1,000 gp per level of percentile Strength (consult *Table 1: Strength from the Player's Handbook* for the levels of percentile Strength), and 1,500 gp per point of Strength over 18/00. Strength enhancement need not be performed in stages; the client can go from Strength 13 to Strength 19 in one operation, if he or she has the money up front (and doesn't mind looking rather odd afterward).

Body Armor

This is a commonly performed operation, as many species wish for thicker skin to prevent damage in battle. A

xixchil surgeon can do wonders for the client's skin durability, but the process is a slow one and must be performed in stages over time. Each "step" of Armor Class change is a separate operation. At least a month must elapse before further skin thickening can be performed.

Creatures with hardened exoskeletons to begin with (crabmen, thri-kreen, xixchil) show little difference after a body armor enhancement operation; their exoskeletons are a little thicker, a little harder than before. Soft-skinned creatures (like humans) gradually develop a thick hide like that of a rhino. After the "full treatment" over the course of almost a year, a battle-hardened xixchil will look little different than when he or she started the series of operations, whereas the transformation is quite noticeable in a human or demihuman.

Table 2 shows the standard prices for each point of Armor Class change. Note that an AC change of 9 "steps" is the absolute limit: A battle-hardened xixchil, with a beginning AC of 5, can eventually reach AC -4; a human with a beginning AC of 10 can only attain AC 1.

Weapon Limb

The extra limb created by this surgical operation is usually not a fully functional arm complete with hand and fingers, but rather a mobile stump grafted to a weapon head. Obviously, the cost for this procedure is significant, as it involves not only the stimulation of additional growth but also a complete reworking of the client's skeletal, muscular, and nervous systems. In most cases, the extra arm grows from the client's side (below the normal arm), and ends shortly after the elbow joint (occasionally the elbow joint does not grow and must be artificially crafted by the xixchil surgeon). A weapon of the client's choice is then grafted onto the stump just below the elbow, creating a weapon arm that allows the client an extra attack in combat. Of course, it takes time to get used to using such an odd attachment; non-weapon proficiency penalties (as per Table 34: Proficiency Slots in the *Player's Handbook*) apply until the character has become accustomed to wielding his or her weapon arm.

The cost of the extra arm growth is 1,800 plus the cost of the specific weapon itself. Only nonmagical weapons are used in the creation of a weapon arm; magical weapons can be used, but lose their magical properties in the attachment process. Weapon damage is per normal for that weapon type; consult the *Player's Handbook* or the *Arms and Equipment Guide* for specifics.

Table 2:
Body Armor Prices and Effects

Cumulative AC Change	Cost	Duration Until Next Change
-1	400 gp	one month
-2	600 gp	one month
-3	800 gp	one month
-4	1,000 gp	five weeks
-5	1,200 gp	five weeks
-6	1,400 gp	five weeks
-7	1,600 gp	six weeks
-8	1,800 gp	seven weeks
-9	2,000 gp	no further change

Implanted Dagger Sheaths

A relatively simple operation, this creates narrow "pockets" anywhere desired on the client's body, similar to a marsupial's pouch. These "pockets" are most often thin, narrow, and reinforced to accommodate a thin-handled blade, allowing the client to conceal a dagger or throwing knife on his or her person. The standard fee for such a dagger sheath is usually around 30–50 gp.

Hidden Dart Throwers

Similar in nature to the hidden dagger sheaths detailed above, these narrow subcutaneous tubes have a mechanical (spring-loaded) firing mechanism powerful enough to launch a dart across a room. They are commonly placed along the forearm, allowing them to be aimed somewhat by pointing a straight arm at the target. (The dart is fired by muscle tension.) Each dart thrower costs 70–100 gp, and requires specially designed darts at 10 gp apiece. While not devastating weapons (they inflict only normal damage for darts), the darts can be coated in poison and often provide an element of surprise against those who assume they face an unarmed opponent.

Retractable Blades

Designed along the same lines as hidden dart throwers, the retractable blade is concealed in a reinforced marsupial-like pocket and extended quickly by muscle tension. The blade itself is usually of short sword length and placed along the forearm for concealment and easiest use. The retractable blade is a favorite among professional assassins, and it generally costs 250–300 gp, which includes the blade, as it is not detachable after the operation.

Wings

Many people wish they could fly, but there are better ways to go about it than to enter a xixchil's body modification shop. In order to grant flight to those not born with wings, a pair of wings must be grown from the client's body. This is a lengthy process, made far shorter if the xixchil is allowed to alter the client's forearms instead of growing new wings from scratch. (Of course, this usually precludes the forearms' use for anything other than flying.) In addition to the wings, the client's bones must be hollowed out, the digestive system made more efficient, and lung capacity increased. At the end of this extensive operation (which usually runs 2,000–2,500 gp), the client will be able to fly at Movement rate 12 (D). Of course, the oversized wings are hard to hide and usually preclude the character from adventuring in small, cramped places.

If the client already has wings (like xixchil), they can be enhanced to support extended flight for 250–500 gp. Each further "upgrade" adds three to the client's flight speed, enhances Maneuverability Class by one, and costs 1,500–1,800 gp.



Role Models

The Great Outdoors

By J.D. Wiker and Jim Bishop

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky

While adventuring in the outdoors is a great break from dungeon crawls and city intrigue, it can be a challenge for any DM to turn a cross-country hike into an exciting, action-packed piece of storytelling. Without miniatures to add structure, even well-meaning DMs can fall into one of two pitfalls when running an outdoor adventure.

One mistake is to calculate how long the journey will take and then "fast-forward" the adventure to the next encounter along the way—or even to the final destination. The DM can also overcompensate with too much description.

Horns, Teeth, and Nails

The trick to painting realistic horns and teeth is to layer lighter colors onto darker ones subtly using a technique called *blending*.

First, paint the tooth, horn, or nail black, just like any other piece of detail. Next—using quick, light dabs—paint the piece dark brown, leaving a thin black line around the base. Use progressively lighter tints of brown, moving up through tan to cream and finish at bright white, each time painting a slightly smaller area closer to the tip.

The trick is to make the transitions as smooth as possible, avoiding visible "stripes." Keep brush strokes light, use very little paint on the brush, and use at least four different colors of paint—the more the better.

The same technique can be adapted to paint glowing magical weapons and powerful items; just blend from dark red to bright white/yellow instead of brown to white.

Both approaches leave players bored, with little feeling that their characters are in charge of their own actions.

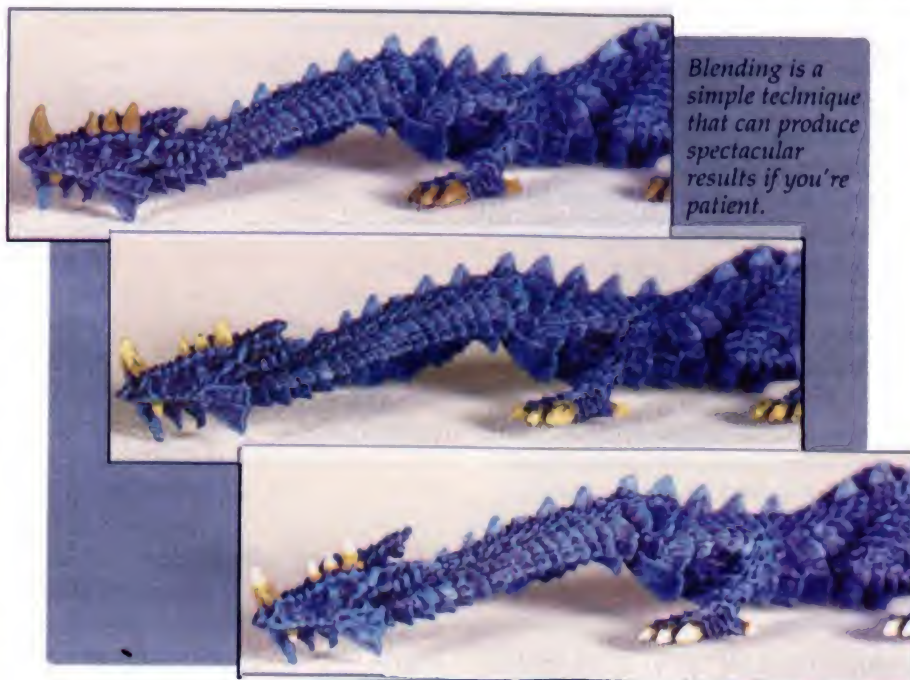
A better way to run an outdoor adventure is to use miniatures on a battlemat and let players choose their characters' course for themselves, just as in a dungeon. There are a few differences between indoor and outdoor travel that require some changes, but the two are generally similar.

The most important difference between outdoor and indoor adventuring is scale. The outdoors are big, and—unless the party is on a very short jaunt—dungeon scale just won't work. *Combat & Tactics* (pages 9–10) uses Missile Scale (1" is equal to 5 yards) to represent encounter distances greater than 50 yards, but even at that scale the typical

outdoor map is much too big to cover.

An excellent compromise between missile scale and strategic (world map) scale is what could be called "outdoor scale," or 200 feet to the 1-inch square. Outdoor scale has several advantages to offer the campaign. First, terrain features like hills, elevation changes, and waterways are much easier to draw in the larger scale, making the DM's job easier. Second, even over difficult terrain the typical party is able to move more than 12 miles a day—or about three hundred battlemats in encounter scale.

Outdoor scale is large enough that the same day of travel only requires a half-dozen redraws. Each square on the outdoor map represents the approximate area of a typical encounter map. The outdoor map then becomes a patchwork of



encounter-sized areas, much easier for the DM to convert encounter maps and for the players to visualize.

The goal of using minis and maps is to present players with the kinds of choices that their characters would be making on an overland journey: Should we cross the ravine, the swamp, or the river? Which mountain pass should we use? Should we take a slower route through the hills to avoid an orc camp on the plain? There are benefits and penalties to these choices beyond those the DM has already set up in the area. Using the optional rule (below), a party that travels through safer areas and avoids traveling at night has a good chance of avoiding hazardous encounters, while the careless party might be ambushed.

These are the situations and choices that make outdoor adventuring fun and mysterious, and the more of them the players get to make, the more fun everyone will have.

JD Wiker paints even rocks to look more "natural," while Jim Bishop is still playing Baldur's Gate until four in the morning.



"Outdoor Scale" is a great compromise between missile and strategic scales.

Optional Rule: Outdoor Encounters

Outdoor encounters include just three factors: location, location, and location. Are the PCs caught in the middle of a rocky field or trapped in a gully? Are they hidden behind a stone wall atop a hill? The situation at the start of an encounter has a profound impact on the situation at the end.

To determine which side has the favorable position, roll at the beginning of an outdoor encounter, just as surprise is rolled normally. Each side rolls 1d10 and applies the following modifiers, as appropriate:

Condition	Modifier
Native to the area	+1
Superior senses	+1
Ranger or druid with party	+1
Map with party	+1
Terrain (top of cliff/mountain/hill top)	+1
Terrain (desert/plain/tundra)	+1
Poor visibility	-1
Terrain (swamp)	-1
Terrain (valley/ravine/crevasse)	-1
Terrain (dense woods/jungle)	-2
Darkness	-2
Fleeing	-2

Difference	Outcome
0-2	Both sides set up in identical cover and elevation at a randomly selected encounter range (standard encounter.)
3-4	Low side sets up first. High side sets up anywhere on the board.
5-6	Low side sets up first. High side may move low side up to three squares in any direction. High side sets up anywhere on the board.
7-8	High side sets up both low and high sides anywhere on the board.
9+	As 7-8 above, but the encounter is also an ambush. (See below.)

An ambush is a special kind of encounter in which one side has extra advantage over the other. The defender is always surprised, and the attackers always have the benefits the terrain offers. At the very least, this means cover (granting a -4 AC bonus is typical), but usually some other terrain feature is involved. This is where creativity comes into play: A mountain ambush might mean the attackers have started an avalanche above their prey, while in a swamp the ambushed party could find themselves caught between combat and quicksand! As a general guideline, the extra advantages to an attacker should force the defenders into a difficult decision but not instantly kill them.

The high result gains the drop on the loser. The difference in the two scores determines their relative positions:



BACK TO THE FUTURE

BY MARC SCHMALZ

ILLUSTRATED BY
RON SPENCER

Despite the versatility of the *ALTERNITY* rules, most players concentrate only on serious, gritty settings full of gray morality and conspiracy in the vein of *Aliens*, *X-Files*, or *Blade Runner*. As great as those settings and stories are, some of the most interesting science fiction is idealistic, light, and even comedic or downright campy. It's the science fiction from the Late Late Movie or, more to the point, the science fiction found through *Mystery Science Theater 3000*—the science fiction of 1950s cinema.

Fifties-themed science fiction stories have the feel of movies like *This Island Earth* and *Them!*, or even *Prince of Space* and *Fire Maidens from Outer Space*. By following a few guidelines, you can capture that atmosphere in your own *ALTERNITY* game.

Setting

While a lot of '50s science fiction takes place on contemporary Earth (on the cusp between Progress Levels 4 and 5), many films either confront contemporary Earth with the existence of an advanced civilization or take place in the far-flung future, the now-ridiculous PL 7 and PL 8 cultures of the year 2000.

History: Pick a date in history to use as the release date for your "movie," and ignore history after that point. Depending on the tone of the game, this could be the most challenging roleplaying element for players. No one should have a clue that Kennedy will be assassinated in the '60s, that men will land on the moon, or that the Mars lander will start sending back pictures of the red planet. Instead,

the GM should choose a few landmark events that might affect the game.

For example, The narrator at the opening of *Forbidden Planet* says that humans reached the moon at the end of the 21st century. That's as much "ancient history" as the players need to start playing. Historical depth, if there is any, should be limited to the heroes' lifetime; the distant past is of no concern.

Names: Period names are also needed to give a setting the right feel. The sidearm carried by a Combat Spec might have statistics identical to that of a laser pistol, but it's better to call it a ray gun or atomic blaster when looking for that '50s feel. While the denizens of the retro setting wear togas, the spaceloth from which they are made probably has the same properties as a CF softsuit. Adding

What's in a Name?

Your villain can't threaten the heroes properly with a garden-variety laser. Instead, he'll unleash the cosmic mega-stellar particle beam!

If you're stumped for fantastic adjectives for your props and weapons, roll on this chart for inspiration. Greek letters and the names of many elements also make great '50s-style super-science adjectives!

d10	Adjectives	Prefixes
1	cosmic	mega-
2	super	electro-
3	neutron	X-
4	radio	holo-
5	death	micro-
6	astro	magneto-
7	positron	ultra-
8	space	sub-
9	stellar	bio-
10	atomic	meta-

a '50s adjective to a normal device usually does the trick.

Location: The physical location of the setting is meaningless. What matters is the look and feel of the setting, reflected in the clothing and architecture—in short, the fashion—whether on Earth or in the stars. Advanced civilizations fall into one of two fashions: *retro-futuristic* or *ultra-futuristic*.

The *ultra* setting is typified by silver lamé jumpsuits and art-deco architecture. The lines are sleek and smooth, and the buildings often extend impossibly high, defying gravity. Everything shines and shimmers. Men wear belted jumpsuits, while women wear either the same jumpsuit or a similar top with a mini skirt. Clothing variations include sashes,

ATOMIC HEAT RAY

	Handgun	Rifle
Availability	Military	Military
Payload	Stream of Atomic Heat	Stream of Atomic Heat
Type/Firepower	En/G	En/O
Accuracy	+4	+1
Mode	F	F
Type/Firepower	En/G	En/O
Actions	2	2
Skill	Modern Ranged Weapons	Modern Ranged Weapons
Mass	2 kg	4 kg
Length	25 cm	55 cm
Damage	1d4w/2d4w/1d4+1m	2d4w/2d4+2w/2d4m
Range	6/12/24	12/24/48
Hide	-2	—



The atomic heat ray fires a devastatingly powerful split-second beam of pastel blue light, but it is wildly inaccurate as well, imposing a +4 step penalty to all attacks. If damage from the atomic heat ray manages to cause all of a living target's wound or mortal boxes to be checked, that target is vaporized. The Gamemaster should leave behind a portion of the target when thematically appropriate—anything from a piece of its clothing to a full skeleton.

small insignia, and hats to indicate social or military rank. The ultra look is perfect for a species from Mars or Jupiter that has come to conquer the Earth or for the humans of the year 2000.

The *retro* setting is typified by togas and Roman columns. This fashion is easiest to envision and explain to players, since everyone has a basic concept of Roman culture. Just change the white togas to silver or gold lamé, and make the columns out of a futuristic material. Colored sashes and brooches or other jewelry can be used to indicate rank, and the highest officials should certainly wear laurel wreaths even if their title isn't "King" or "Emperor."

The retro look also requires variations for the military. The basic Roman foot soldier image will do, if the clothing is made of futuristic materials. The gladius can even remain at the hip, but add an atomic heat ray gun as well. If the heroes happen to discover the continent of

Atlantis, on Earth or in space, the retro look will probably be vogue that season—and every season.

Messages and Morals

Whether the plot concerns giant monsters, an alien invasion, or robots from the future, there is a set of messages that almost all American-made '50s science fiction presents to its audience. A '50s setting falls flat without these messages. It's impossible to capture the feel without a moral.

Gender Roles: While there were larger issues in film, one of the hardest to deal with in a modern game is gender roles. The message sent is a little duplicitous, too.

The strong, professional female is a staple of '50s science fiction. There are plenty, usually in the form of Tech Ops (research scientists) and Diplomats (journalists). The message to males in the audience is that women are capable of

being as professional and dedicated as any male, and that they'll be better off when they recognize this fact and let women work in the new roles they've carved out for themselves. This is the '50s, and women have already proved themselves in the workplace while so many men were overseas during World War II. Chunk-headed Combat Spec and Free Agent males in the cast can exhibit a little character development as they come to understand the nature of the modern woman.

The other half of the message is a little less politically correct. Females are told over and over that women can't forget that they are female even though they might be working in traditionally male jobs. Character development for these strong women usually involves the thawing of their frigid, businesslike demeanor as they fall in love with the male lead. The message is clear: Despite a woman's professional development, her primary role in life is loving a man, and few science fiction movies of the period let an audience forget that. *It Came from Beneath the Sea* serves as an exceptional illustration of these gender roles.

The American Way: Nationalism rides high during the '50s. With WWII only a few years in the past, plus the threat of communism and the start of the Cold War, civic pride runs high even in film. Introducing an element of patriotism and creating enemies that present a cultural threat as well as a physical one can help give a setting a '50s feel.

No one seems to question the motives or integrity of the U.S. military in film during this period—those are the men who risked their lives to bring the threat of fascism to an end, and now they're vital in our efforts to check the spread of communism. They're the defenders of the American way of life. On rare occasions, the top brass might have their principles called into question, but not foot soldiers. In the '50s, everyone still had a friend or relative in the military or had memories of those lost in battle. Many of the heroes of these films hold military rank. In *The Giant Mantis*, for example, not only was the person who killed the mantis in the military, but the producers established the paleobiologist's military background early in the



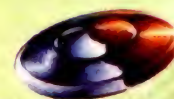
EXETER-CLASS FLYING SAUCER

Compartments: 6
Maneuvering Rating: 0
Cruising Speed: 1.5 AU/hour
Durability: 32
Acc: 2 Mpp
Berthing: 6

Armaments: Caustic Vapors, Atomic Heat Ray
Defenses: Diamond-bonded Martian Steel Plating
Computer: Ordinary Core
 Q-Radar with Atomic Tele-Viewer (Communications and Sensors)
Engines: Atomic Rocket Drive (treat as Induction Engines, if needed)
 Anti-gravity Pods (treat as Planetary Thrusters, if needed)
Power: U238-Fueled Atomic Fission Reactor (8 power factors)
Cost: 1,000,000 SKMU*
Life Support: Oxygen Tanks



Roll	Compartment	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
1-2	Command	Ordinary Computer Core (1/0) Q-Radar w/ Atomic Tele-Viewer (1/0)	4/4/2
3-4	Crew	12 Wall-Mounted Bunk Bbeds (1/0) Captain's Quarters (1/0) Atomic Medi-Bed (1/0)	6/6/3
5-7	Cargo	U238 Storage Units (1/0) Life Support (Oxygen Tanks) (1/0)	4/4/2
8-10	Engineering	Atomic Fission Reactor (2) Atomic Rocket Drive (2/2) Anti-gravity Pods (2/2)	12/12/6
11-14	Weapons 1	Caustic Vapors Emitter (1/0)	2/2/1
15-20	Weapons 2	Atomic Heat Ray (2/2)	4/4/2



Weapons Data

System	Acc	Range	Type	Damage
Atomic Heat Ray	+2	6/12/24	En(e)	d4+2w/2d4+2w/2d4m
Caustic Vapors Emitter	n/a	n/a	Special	d4-2w/d4w/d4-2m

The Atomic Heat Ray operates much like the hand-held version, except that it suffers only a +3 step penalty to attack.

The Caustic Vapors Emitter sprays a highly acidic cloud of gas into space directly behind the saucer. The pursuing pilot must make a Vehicle Operation—*space* roll, modified by the amount of time he or she has to react, to avoid the worst of the gasses. An Amazing success indicates that the pilot completely avoids the vapors, a Good success is treated as an Ordinary hit by the vapors, an Ordinary success is treated as a Good hit, and a Failure is treated as an Amazing hit.

* Standard Krankorian Monetary Units

TORGON

The Torgon species are large, humanoid insects, strongly resembling mantises (or guys in big mantis suits). They're slow and lumbering, but dangerous in close quarters and tough as nails thanks to their thick exoskeleton.

A Gamemaster can use Torgons in a number of ways. They might be an alien species, indigenous to the first planet humankind explores after leaving Earth, the result of radiation affecting a mantis colony, or the slave race of an advanced civilization.

STR: 14 [+2]
DEX: 8
CON: 14
INT: 4 [-2]
WIL: 10
PER: 4



Attacks

	Skill Score	Damage	Type
Pincers	14/7/3	d4s/d4w/d4-2m*	LI/O
Mandibles*	20/10/5	d6+1w/d8+2w/d4+1m	LI/O

* When a Torgon scores an Amazing success with one of its pincers, it has managed to clamp onto its target. During the next round, it has the option of attacking that target with its mandibles. Breaking a pincer hold requires complex Strength feat check (4 successes). Three failures during this check indicates that the Torgon has managed to regain a Good hold on the hero, and the escape attempt must start over again.

Torgon exoskeletons provide natural armor ratings of d6 (LI)/d6 (HI)/d4 (En).

film. If it was a contemporary '50s role for an able-bodied young man, chances are that the character had some military background. Uncle Sam didn't want just you; he wanted most of your male friends and relatives, too.

Tampering in God's Domain: The dominant religion of American science fiction is a rather nebulous Christian deism. With each experiment gone awry, the theme is, "God set in motion a natural order for all things, and tampering with the natural order will bring only disaster." This applies to almost any advanced technology.

Special Effects

Chances are that a 1950s science fiction film is operating on a shoestring budget, and special effects are expensive. To maintain the feel, make an effort to skimp on the session's budget, too. The easiest way to save is to re-use special effects. Write up a detailed description of a common occurrence, like a rocket ship landing on a planet. Whenever a rocket ship lands during the campaign, read that description verbatim, re-using that great special effect. Other directors actu-

ally reverse film to save money. For example, they might simply reverse the rocket take-off footage to show the landing of a ship. To make this really effective, the description would have to be a palindrome. That's a lot of time and effort—read "budget"—for a '50s campaign, so it's probably outside the means of the game's "producer." Reversed film usually looked pretty bad. (It's amazing how the smoke and fumes are actually being absorbed back into the rocket!) The Gamemaster can simply read the description backward once and see if the players get it.

Nuclear Power: Yep—it's tampering in God's domain. It would be an understatement to say that the world was pre-occupied with the power of the atom during the 1950s. The plot of *This Island Earth* centers on another planet's enormous appetite for atomic power. From *Godzilla* to the ants of *Them!* to the title character in *The Amazing Colossal Man*, almost every cinematic pituitary problem has atomic power at its origin. A civilization's splitting of the atom leads to its greatest threat ever. On the surface it might seem strange to receive an anti-

tech message from a science fiction film, but at least humanity comes out on top ... usually.

It's easy to compare the use of atomic power in the '50s to modern films that deal with pollution or genetic engineering. These are hot issues today, and the general populace doesn't understand them fully. Humans fear that which they don't understand. Cancer is the big bogeyman of radiation, not giant mutated monsters, because society better understands the effects of radiation today. The real ramifications of ozone depletion, deforestation, and genetic engineering aren't understood and therefore make good monster origins. For example, the bugs in *Mimic* are the result of an unnatural genetic hybrid that kept evolving. In the '50s, the bugs' origin would have revolved around uranium rather than DNA tampering.

Atomic devices are rarely seen in '50s science fiction, but a smart Gamemaster can still make good use of his or her special effects budget here. Dig into the cultural knapsack of '50s technological imagery, and find some interesting contraptions that either produce or are fueled by atomic power. Make sure that radioactive items glow in the dark or are hot to the touch. Finally, everyone knows what a mushroom cloud looks like, and it remains an ominous, threatening image even today. Use it.

Radar: If atomic power is the technological pariah of '50s science fiction, radar is its antithesis. No matter the problem, radar is the solution. In the same way that radiation was the misunderstood bogeyman released by WWII, radar is the mistaken savior. A careful listener can probably find several references to radar shields in '50s movies, indicating a function similar to the *ALTERNITY* game's Deflection Inducer or Ablative Shield defensive systems. In *Prince of Space*, the Phantom Dictator of Krankor uses X-radar to detect just about everything, including the presence of the disguised Prince of Space on a busy street.

How is this applied to a '50s setting? Well, it saves a lot of time on making up sensory systems for ships and planetary explorers. Add a letter to the front of the word "radar" and have it detect whatever is convenient or applicable to your

game. Ignore what everyone now knows to be true of radar and accept it as the heroes' key to near-omniscience ... if they know what they're looking for.

Robots: The defining characteristic of '50s robots is that they are all roughly human in size, shape, and function. There wasn't a lot of choice—directors had to stick people in robot costumes to get them to work. Giving robots human form also leads to their cephalization—every robot has its CPU in its head, and destroying its head "kills" the robot. This factor remains true from '50s to the present. While R2-D2 wasn't human in form, C-3PO definitely had his CPU in his head. The same was true of the T-100 from the *Terminator* movies. Some clichés die hard.

Fifties robots are rarely meant for subtle, exact work. They're unstoppable muscle, the Tin Woodsman on steroids. Often they have higher functions as well, but even though Robbie the Robot could synthesize acres of lead plating in an evening, his primary function in *Forbidden Planet* was his potential physical threat to the human soldiers. Gort's role as enforcer in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is plain, as well.

Weaponry: Gamemasters who want to use energy weapons in the game should choose a form of beam appropriate to the genre. *Star Trek* phaser "glowing stream of light" effects don't appear often and are not common in earlier low-budget films and serials. The special effects guy simply scrapes the celluloid off the film to produce a white lightninglike "beam." There's also the lethargic blue energy bullet used in *Forbidden Planet*, apparently the thematic predecessor to the *Babylon 5* PPG discharge effect.

Weaponry sound effects can also be important for giving a session the right feel. For example, the atomic heat ray's lightning-beam might sound remarkably like a recording of a small car failing to start played at the wrong speed.

The feel is heightened with a good special effect for the destruction caused by energy weapons. Do the energy weapons cause a small smoking hole in someone's uniform, or do they evaporate their target in a puff of smoke? Leaving behind a marker of the carnage is a popular motif. As examples, consider that the weapons used by the Phantom

ROCKET SUIT

This full-body armored suit has a built-in rocket pack, enabling Rocket Rangers to fly both inside and outside an atmosphere. Since control of the rocket pack requires strength and dexterity, the standard chart on page 39 of the *Player's Handbook* can be used to determine safe rocket pack movement rates for each Ranger.

The Rocket Pack is powered by a super-secret fuel that only needs to be replaced about once a month under normal usage. A rocket suit has enough oxygen to keep a Ranger alive in space for three hours, a built-in scrambled communication device (3km range), and a miniaturized Q-Radar unit that can detect an approaching enemy and beep out a warning to the Ranger. These advanced systems are why no Ranger would ever allow a Rocket Suit to fall into pirate hands.

The serrated fins running down the back of the helmet are symbolic of the Rocket Rangers. That design motif is also used on the Rocket Rangers' Humidor-class rocket ship.

Availability: Rocket Rangers Only

Cost: Classified

Mass: 10 kg

Composition: Cotton, plus classified materials

Environmental Tolerance:

Gravity: G0–G2 protected

Radiation: R0–R2 protected

Atmosphere: A0–A2 protected

Pressure: P0–G2 protected

Heat: H0–H2 protected

Action Penalty: +1

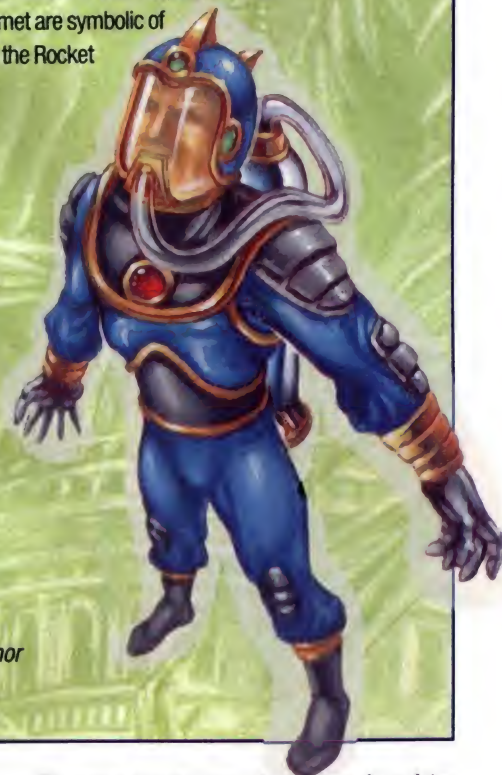
Toughness: Good

LI/HL/En: d6/d6/d6+2

Hide: —

Effective Strength: n/a

Skill (for flight): Armor Operation—powered armor
or Vehicle Operation—air vehicle (+3 penalty)



Dictator of Krankor instantly disintegrated everything but soldiers' helmets, while the focusing disintegrator ray used by Derek and Thor in *Teenager from Outer Space* removed all flesh and clothing from a victim's skeleton. Gort's eye beam was even spiffier, leaving melted remains of machinery behind. The audience never saw it hit flesh, but all conjecture is rather gruesome.

Space Ships and Travel: In '50s film, there are some details worth developing and some that should be glossed over in favor of other plot elements. Unless used as a plot point, fuel or engine tech may simply be ignored. And while the universe can be mapped completely, no '50s serial or movie ever bothered to do so. Instead of developing a complex paradigm for faster-than-light travel and highly detailed star charts, generalize about how long it takes to get to and from important planets.

The standard cigar-shaped rocket ship is fine for Earthers and even some alien races (as in *Rocketship X-M* and *Fire Maidens from Outer Space*), but flying saucers also hold a lot of nostalgic value (*The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Teenagers from Outer Space*, and *Forbidden Planet*). If the cigar model is used, remember that while they land vertically, fly horizontally, and have no specified artificial gravity systems, "up" is still always "up." It's one more example of the selective physics of '50s science fiction.

While energy weapons are common, energy shields are more scarce. Consider omitting energy weapons and shields completely; instead, equip ships with space torpedoes and armor plating.

Space travel is plagued by atomic rays, cosmic dust storms, and meteor showers—especially meteor showers. These are usually painfully obvious, quick, and pointless threats, the cinematic equiva-

Filmography

Before launching your new campaign, you have some research to do! Track down a few of these films for a Sci-Fi marathon with your players. Those marked with an asterisk also received the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* treatment.

20 Million Miles to Earth. 1957.

Morningside Movies.

Amazing Colossal Man, The. 1957.

American International Pictures.*

Attack of the Killer Shrews. 1959.

McLendon Radio Pictures.*

Beast with a Million Eyes, The. 1955.

San Mateo Productions.

Crash of Moons. 1956. Official Films.*

Day the Earth Stood Still, The. 1951.

20th Century Fox.

Destination Moon. 1950.

George Pal Productions.

Earth vs. the Spider. 1958.

American International Pictures.*

Fire Maidens from Outer Space. 1954.

Topaz Film Company.*

Forbidden Planet. 1956.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

From the Earth to the Moon. 1958.

Warner Bros.

Giant Gila Monster, The. 1959.

McLendon Radio Pictures.*

Giant Mantis, The. 1957.

Universal International Pictures.*

Gojira. 1954. Toho.

Incredible Shrinking Man, The. 1957.

Universal International Pictures.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers. 1956.

Walter Wanger Pictures Inc.

It Came from Beneath the Sea. 1955.

Columbia Pictures Corporation.

It Came from Outer Space. 1953.

Universal International Pictures.

It Conquered the World. 1956.

American International Pictures.*

King Dinosaur. 1955. Lippert Pictures.*

Manhunt in Space. 1956. Official Films.*

Plan 9 from Outer Space. 1958.

Reynolds Pictures.

Prince of Space. 1959. Toei.*

Radar Men from the Moon. 1952.

Republic Pictures Corporation.

Revenge of the Creature. 1955.

Universal International Pictures.*

Rocketship X-M. 1950.

Lippert Pictures.*

Space Children, The. 1958.

Paramount Pictures.*

Teenagers from Outer Space. 1959.

Topor Corporation.*

Terror from the Year 5000. 1958.

La Jolla Productions.*

Them! 1954.

Warner Bros.

This Island Earth. 1954.

Universal International Pictures.*

War of the Worlds, The. 1953.

Paramount Pictures.

lent of an inflamed appendix. They can be a gripping initial threat, though—a means to grab the players' attentions and get them involved in the game. Then again, directors thought it was a good way to get the audience involved early in the show, and it never seemed to work very well. Use with caution.

Supporting Cast

Now for the antagonist. The genre has provided myriad variations on a few basic themes.

Giant Monsters: There are really two varieties of giant, typified by *Godzilla* and *Them!* *Godzilla*, if one believes the cartoon theme song, is 30 stories tall—over 240 feet high. The ants of *Them!* aren't anywhere near that size, but ants 9–12 feet long are still horrible, especially when they eat humans. The smaller terrors are probably better for an ALTERNITY scenario. Human-sized rabbits (*Night of the Lepus*), shrews (*Attack of the Killer Shrews*), and ants make for more personal, appropriate opponents.

In many cases, the nature of the monstrous creatures is a mystery through much of the movie. The ants of *Them!* were unseen for about thirty minutes, represented only by their tracks, sounds, and the smell of formic acid. Leave an air of uncertainty as the beastly antagonists

are introduced. "Why, there are thousands of one-inch divots in the metal floor, Dirk! As if it was melted by red-hot pokers." "He didn't die from that wound. He has a massive amount of toxin in his blood—centipede venom. But to get that amount in his body, he must have been bitten by a thousand centipedes..."

Aliens: H.R. Giger and Ridley Scott won't change the look of science fiction for another thirty years, but '50s films still offer a wide range of alien life forms. Perhaps most common are the aliens that look and sounds like humans, except for their clothing, of course. In *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Klaatu looks and sounds enough like an Earthling to mingle among humans while the military conducted an active search. By humanizing the alien, the filmmakers allow the audience to identify with him; the same principle should hold true for the players.

There are also any number of completely alien creatures trying to take over the world. An alien can look like a giant lumpy clove of garlic with sharp, pointy teeth, a huge pile of animated rags, or giant insects. The mutant (sic) from *This Island Earth* (insect) and the title creatures from *It Conquered the World* (garlic) and *Night of the Blood Beast* (whatever) are examples of just how nutty aliens can appear.

Mad Scientists: Whether they're evil, power-mad, or just deluded, mad scientists are often the catalysts for science fiction adventures. While an evil genius can make a great antagonist, obsessive, monomaniacal, and socially shunned scientists can make exceptional henchmen for the opposition, too. Even the best-intentioned good scientist can be lead astray by outside influences or simple character flaws like pride and jealousy.

Characterization of scientists are important. Maniacal laughter and a sense of moral superiority are vital, and even Gamemasters with bad German or Russian accents should use them without worrying about quality—few '50s actors ever did.

Plot Briefs

Period plots can be pretty thin, sometimes a film genre formality—the carrier wave used to deliver overdoses of '50s morality and cheesy special effects. Because so many elements overlap in this genre, it should be easy to mix and match ideas from above with one of these simple plot templates.

The first two briefs work best when used as stand-alone adventures, since their capacity for a long-term campaign can be pretty limited. The last brief is most appropriate for a running cam-

paign, since it's the same basic premise as many serials.

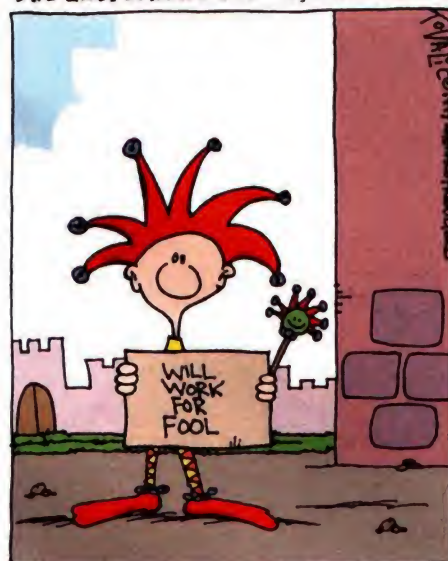
First Men in Space: The heroes are members of the first manned space flight. Their mission: Explore the planet found orbiting the sun directly opposite the Earth. After a crash, the heroes must help the natives with a serious social or technical problem before they will be allowed to leave.

Scolopendrida: Government time-travel experiments have gone horribly wrong, and giant radioactive centipedes have come back through time. The heroes must track and eliminate the creatures before they threaten the lives of people in a nearby city.

Space Rangers: In the far-flung future, the heroes are part of the Rocket Rangers space police force. Unfortunately, the notorious space pirate Julian LeFevre has broken out of space prison, and the Rangers' must follow leads on each of Julian's old cronies and try to recapture him before he becomes a threat once again.

"This article marks the first time that Marc Schmalz, a web developer by profession, has been able to make productive use of his BS in History. He hopes his old college professors are proud."

The Unspeakable Off by John Kovalic



Hero Templates

These four "kits" hold the basics for some stereotypical '50s hero types. The skills are listed in order of importance to the hero.



Rocket Ranger

(Combat Spec, futuristic)

A member of the highly trained elite Rocket Ranger Space Police Force. While this Ranger is a Combat Spec character, the force is made up of all types.

Skills:

Armor
Operation—powered; Vehicle
Operation—air; Ranged
Weapon, Modern—rifle;
Athletics; Melee Weapon;
Unarmed Attack; Resolve
of Iron

Flaws: Temper or Code of Honor

Equipment: Rocket suit, Atomic Heat Rifle



Government Scientist

(Tech Op, contemporary '50s)

The driven professional, bent on proving any number of civilization-sharing theories while equipped with a wide array of scientific skills.

Skills: Life Sciences—biology and/or botany;

Medical Science;
Physical Science—physics;
Knowledge—first aid;
Investigate—deduce

Perks: Photographic
Memory

Flaws: Obsessed

Equipment: Lab coat, clipboard, glasses



Space Pilot

(Free Agent, any setting)

After proving herself as a fighter pilot, she is singled out to shepherd explorers into space on a vital mission.

Skills: Vehicle Operation—air, space;

Dare-devil—flight;

Navigation;

Ranged Weapon, Modern—pistol; Unarmed Attack;

Technical Science—repair

Perks: Danger Sense;

Reflexes

Flaws: Old Injury

Equipment: Pistol, aviator jacket, cap and goggles, compass



Wealthy Socialite

(Diplomat, contemporary '50s)

Raised in a privileged family by eccentric parents, this tomboy had the freedom to grow outside "a female's station" but has developed into a desirable young woman.

Skills: Animal Handling;

Acrobatics—animal riding;

Ranged Weapon,

Primitive—bow; Awareness;

Entertainment—dance, instrument, and/or sing;

Interaction—seduce and/or charm; Deception—bluff

Perks: Great Looks; Filthy Rich

Flaws: Bad Luck

Equipment: Horse, saddle and riding clothes, evening gown, lots of cash

\$1.50

Tulsa  ExaminerSunday
Edition

CDC Quarantine Turns Into Standoff

POTEAU, OK. [AP] — The Center for Disease Control declared a state of quarantine on the town of Sorrels late last night, citing an outbreak of the Houston virus. The quarantine soon turned into a Waco-style standoff when some of Sorrel's 750 citizens fired on Army helicopters assisting the CDC.

Though CDC and Army officials have so far refused to comment, residents of Sorrels have used cellular telephones to contact the media and tell their side of the story.

"We woke up to tanks right on our doorsteps," said Wayne Kilkenny, who operates the local filling station. "They said they needed to test us, but they wouldn't say for what. It's got a lot of folks scared."

The standoff has already claimed the lives of two young people. The victims, identified as John Sturdevan, 17, and Amy Lambert, 18, were apparently attempting to bypass the roadblocks when they were fired upon by Army helicopters.

"They just blew up his truck," said another caller, who refused to be identified. "I might have turned myself in before, but now they're going to have to take me out of here in a body bag."

With the town of Sorrels blacked out by Army engineers, and the roads blocked by tanks and barricades, representatives of the Center for Disease Control and the U.S. Army have been meeting with the president since early this morning. A spokesman for the White House has said that the president is reviewing the situation, and a statement is expected this afternoon.

Gamemaster Hints

This story begins with an apparent outbreak of the so-called "Houston virus" in a small town in Oklahoma, and the subsequent response by the Center for Disease Control. The truth is that the CDC believes that the town has been compromised by sandmen and has asked the Army for help.

Unfortunately, the townspeople are refusing to give themselves up for

"testing." This might be because a significant portion of the population have already been converted to sandmen. Alternatively, it might just be that the isolated community reacted to the quarantine with armed paranoia. The heroes can try to work with the CDC or try to slip past the troops and find out what is really going on in Sorrels.

DARK MATTER™

Winter fashions have arrived, and the watchword this year is mammalian!

Three top designers, including the vibrant Thuldan designer, Chevron, have unveiled living furred garments called Genocoats for the 2502 season to keep you toasty—and stylish—in the coldest of winter chills.

"These dazzling white and midnight black longcoats protect you from the cold by generating their own body heat," says Chevron. "It's like having a snuggly pet to help keep you warm."

A liquid protein fed through an implanted tube keeps each coat alive, shiny, and healthy for years. According to Chevron, the coats stay warm in -50° C temperatures, and they hibernate when outside temperatures reach +20° C. Function and beauty can be friends!



◀ The
Genocoat
keeps you
toasty
and
stylish!

Gamemaster Hints

Besides their prohibitive expense, genocoats really do live up to their press. Equipped with hoods, oversized genocoats can fit over armor and keep heroes warm and dry in most circumstances. The fashion press doesn't mention that the coats have a waste cylinder that must be replaced weekly, or that the coats require occasional grooming to stay healthy. Regardless, heroes who dress stylishly will be socially bereft without a genocoat for the season. Other complications include:

- ★ The genocoat could give off pheromones or scents that attract predators on some worlds.
- ★ Heroes who mistreat the coats could be hounded by ecological protesters.
- ★ Allergies might make a genocoat a nuisance or useful—in certain circumstances.



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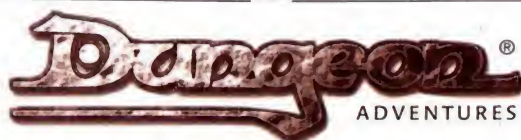
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by Jeff "Zippy" Quick

MARVEL SUPERHEROES ADVENTURE GAME

Mockingbird

(Barbara "Bobbi" Morse)

Earning an excellent reputation as a field operative, Bobbi was later asked by a congressional committee to ferret out corruption within S.H.I.E.L.D. She dropped out of the organization and worked under the code name "Huntress," turning up numerous subversives within the ranks of her former employer. She adopted the name "Mockingbird" during this period. In a climactic race, she handed proof of corruption to Nick Fury personally before being shot by a conspirator.

After her recovery, Mockingbird went freelance. She took a job investigating Cross Technological Enterprises at the same time that Hawkeye was employed as their chief of security. This situation initially put the two at odds, but they worked together to uncover who was trying to kill Hawkeye. Their professional association soon turned romantic, and the couple eloped after a harrowing adventure against the villain Crossfire—who turned out to be the one attempting to assassinate Hawkeye.

When the West Coast Avengers formed, Mockingbird was a charter member along with Hawkeye. The West Coast years were emotionally hard on Bobbi. During this time, she and Hawkeye developed serious differences, notably when Hawkeye discovered that Bobbi didn't share the Avengers' aversion to killing. The couple separated, but they were still in love and eventually reunited. The reunion was fated to be brief, as Mockingbird sacrificed her life to save Hawkeye from the demon Raksasa.

Narrator Notes

Super hero death is about as permanent as a "Don't Walk" sign. This hasn't (yet) been the case with Mockingbird, but even when dead characters stay dead, you still have plenty of options to use them in your game.

The Hamlet Route—A dead hero's ghost comes back to present a dire warning for the remaining heroes.

The Faust Route—Evil beings like Mephisto love to use the visage of a dead loved one to trick a living person into selling his or her soul.

The Dante Route—Your heroes might eventually get a round-trip ticket to the afterlife during an adventure. While there, they'll need a guide. Good thing they know one of the locals!

The Orpheus Route—Your heroes might want to be the ones to bring the dead character back! This is one of the hardest things heroes ever do, and they could easily screw it up. Most likely, someone else will have to trade his or her own life for the life of the lost one. Who will it be?

MARVEL
COMICS

Strength

60

Agility

70

Intellect

80

Willpower

30

Edge

2

Hand Size

12.5

Skills

Clubs

Acrobatics

Biology, Espionage

Taunting

Powers:

Equipment: **Body**

Armor +3

Battle-Staves +3 (can fire from wrist mounts or be thrown as a javelin when connected)

Leaping +3 (when connected, the staves create a vaulting pole)

Calling: Adventurer

Personality: Bobbi was usually down-to-earth and pragmatic, but she could easily match her husband, Hawkeye, in a hothead contest. She had a mocking sense of humor, which she used gently on her friends and harshly on her foes.

History

Barbara Morse was a brilliant biologist working on recreating the Super-Soldier serum for the U.S. government. During her study, S.H.I.E.L.D. took notice of her, and she elected to train as an agent. Her first mission took her down to the Savage Land, where she met Ka-Zar. There, the two rooted out an A.I.M. installation that was attempting to steal the Super-Soldier formula.





Convention Calendar

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

- ♦ Australian convention
- * Canadian convention
- European convention
- ☐ Online convention

(Car+entry, or Car+Pen+try)
MIND BLAST Solution: Carpenry

January
EveCon 17
January 7-9 VA
Mc Lean Hilton, Tyson's Corner, VA.
Contact: FanTek, 1607 Thomas Road,
Friendly, MD 20744
Email: bruce@fantek.org

February
SheVaCon
February 4-6 VA
Roanoke Airport Marriott, Roanoke, VA.
Contact: SheVaCon, P.O. Box 416,
Verona, VA 24482-0416
Email: sheva@adelphina.net

March
Stellar Con 24
March 17-19 NC
Ramada Inn and Conference Center,
High Point, NC
Contact: StellarCon 24, Box 4,
Elliott University Center, UNCG,
Greensboro, NC 27412
Website: www.uncg.edu/
student.groups/sf3/stellarcon.htm

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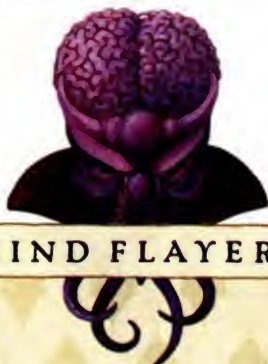
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MIND BLAST

Which nonweapon proficiency can be broken up into two words that might be clued as “fish door,” or as three words that might be clued as “vehicle enclosure attempt?”

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 103



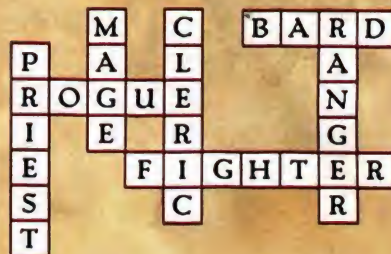
MIND FLAYERS

by Mike Selinker

LEVEL	LETTERS	SPELL
1	W5	DISMAL
2	P7	GARNET
3	W6	GRADIENTS
4	W2	RATION
5	W9/P7	STAPLER
6	W3	NOTICED
7	P2	STRIFE
8	W5	TINKLES
9	W4	CREMATION
10	P7	CERTAIN
11	W6	LATCHING
12	P6	INTERVALS
13	W6	SMARTEN
14	P7	SENIORITA
15	W6	ANTHEMIC
16	P1	DISCREPANT

no.
6

SOLUTION



Circle = Cleric

Drab = Bard

Freight = Fighter

Game = Mage

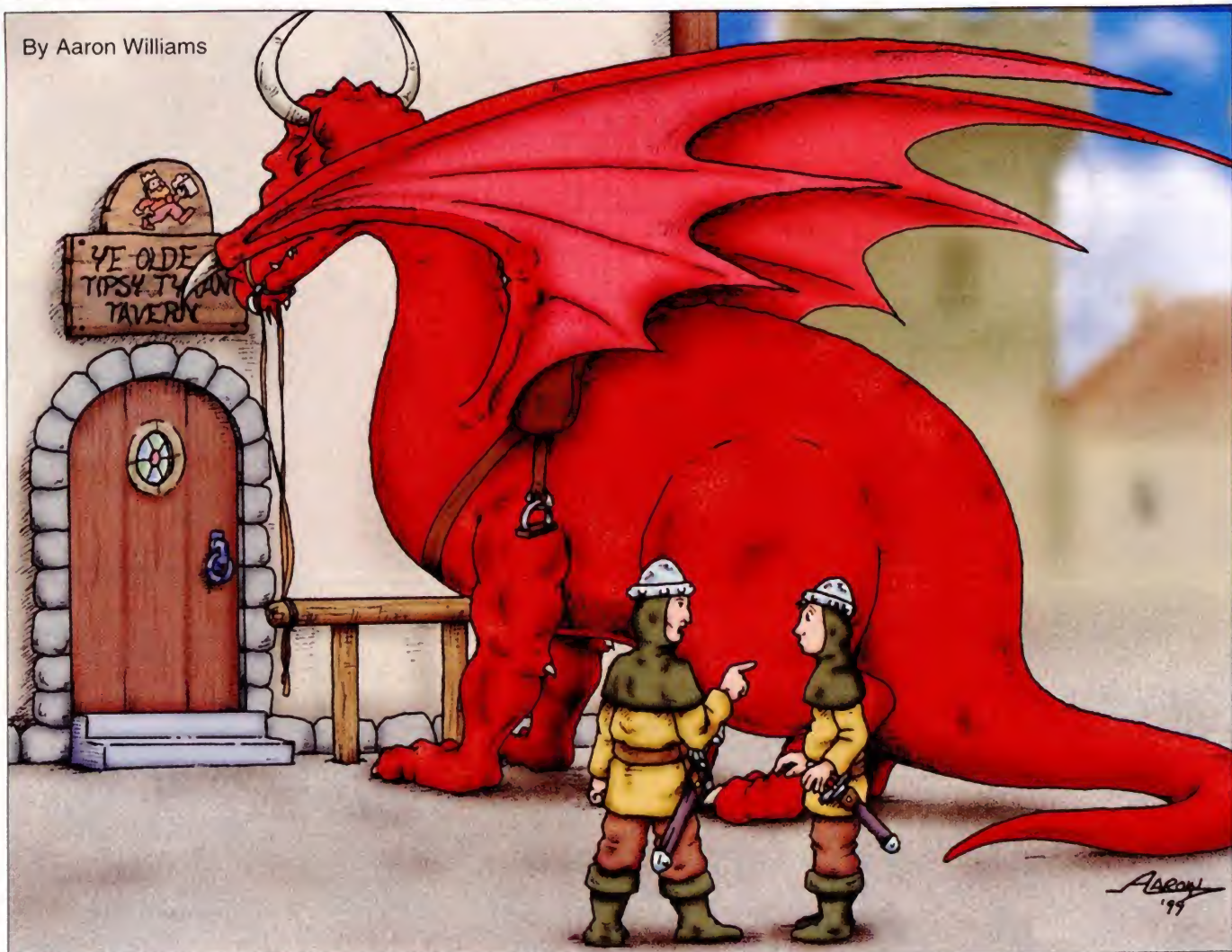
Garner = Ranger

Rouge = Rogue

Sprite = Priest

no.
7

A wizard/priest's list of favorite spells is below, but he has made them hard for you to deduce. Each spell is made up only of the letters listed, but you can use them as many times as you want in any order. For example, he might give the word GAMES if the spell was MESSAGE. All spells are from the Players Handbook. As a help, he's given you the level of each of the spells (W for Wizard, P for Priest).



"No, you go in there and tell him he's illegally parked!"

AS YOU GUYS HEAD TOWARD THE INN, YOU NOTICE **DRAKE** AND HIS ROWDY BAND OF **CENTAURS** ARE LOITERING AROUND THE **ENTRANCE**. THEY'RE **HARASSING** PATRONS ENTERING AND LEAVING THE BUILDING. AS YOU DRAW CLOSER, **DRAKE** NOTICES YOU AND **SNEERS** AT YOU. HE TAKES THE LAST SWIG FROM HIS **WHISKEY FLASK** BEFORE TOSSING IT ASIDE AND MOVING TO **BLOCK** YOUR WAY.



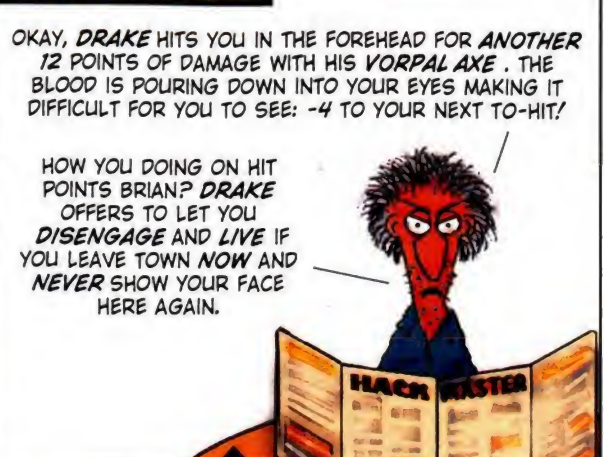
THIRTY MINUTES LATER...



THAT'S YOUR PLAN? SEND ONE OF US OUT TO GET HIS **BUTT** KICKED BY SOME **CENTAUR** WITH A **BAD ATTITUDE**? THAT'S NO PLAN - IT'S **SUICIDE!** THAT WAS MY **HEAD** THEY WERE PLAYING **KICKBALL** WITH YA KNOW.



A WEE BIT LATER...



HOW AM I DOING? HUH? **TWELVE POINTS** YOU SAY? UH ... ER ... HEH HEH. IS THAT **ALL** HE'S GOT? I'M DOING **FINE** COMPARED TO UH ... ER ... COMPARED TO HOW **HE'S** GONNA BE DOING AS SOON AS I FINISH CASTING MY **BASH FACE** SPELL.

YOU DIDN'T ANSWER MY QUESTION, BRIAN. HOW ARE YOU DOING ON **HIT POINTS**? THOSE LAST TWO ATTACKS WERE PRETTY...

BRIAN, **DUDE**, FORGET THE SPELL-LOBBING. USE YOUR **DAGGER** FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.

I ... UH ... I'M GOING TO **CROUCH!**

WHAT'D I TELL YA? HUH? THE **BIG GUY** IS IN **WAY** OVER HIS HEAD. HE'S GETTING **SLAUGHTERED!**

IT'S **MY** FAULT. I SHOULD HAVE STEPPED UP TO THE CHALLENGE.

THE **POOR DEAD FOOL!**

MINUTES LATER...

DRAKE HITS **TEFLON BILLY** FOR **EIGHT** MORE POINTS OF DAMAGE. UH ... BRIAN, HOW MANY **HIT POINTS** DO YOU HAVE?

HEY, B.A., THAT REMINDS ME. I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK. HAVE YOU BEEN **SICK** LATELY?

HUH? **SICK**? NO. I FEEL FINE. WHY WOULD YOU ASK SUCH A ...

NO??!! REALLY? HMMMMM, GEE, THAT'S **SURPRISING**. FORGET I ASKED.

OH NO. YOU CAN'T JUST ASK A QUESTION LIKE THAT AND THEN SAY, "**JUST FORGET I ASKED.**" C'MON BRIAN, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

WELL, TO BE **BRUTALLY** HONEST, I'VE NOTICED A **DISTINCT** DECLINE IN THE **QUALITY** OF THE ADVENTURES YOU'VE BEEN RUNNING LATELY. IT'S ALMOST AS IF YOU JUST DON'T CARE ANYMORE.

WHAT?! DECLINE IN QUALITY? BUT ... BUT ... I PUT OVER **TWENTY HOURS** INTO THIS ADVENTURE.

OH, THEN I **APOLOGIZE**.

WITH THAT KIND OF **TIME INVESTMENT**, IT'S DEFINITELY **NOT** A CASE OF COMPLACENCY OR JUST NOT CARING ABOUT THE GAME ANYMORE.

IT'S PROBABLY JUST A **CLASSIC** CASE OF **GAMEMASTER BURNOUT!!**

NOT YOUR FAULT REALLY. COULD HAPPEN TO **ANYONE!**

BUT THEN AGAIN, MAYBE I'M **TOTALLY** OFF BASE HERE. AFTER ALL, YOUR ADVENTURES HAVE **ALWAYS** BEEN **MEDIOCRE** AT **BEST**. SO ... WHERE WERE WE?

NANOSECONDS LATER...

HEY??!! WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING? WE HAVEN'T SETTLED **EXPERIENCE POINTS** FOR THE EVENING!!

AWH C'MON, B.A! I HAVEN'T MET MY **HACK-QUOTA** FOR THE NIGHT.

I'M CURIOUS. JUST HOW MANY **HIT POINTS** DID YOU HAVE LEFT?

ACTUALLY NONE. **DRAKE** TOOK ME OUT WITH HIS **FIRST** BLOW. THAT'S WHY I HAD TO PUSH **B.A.'S** BUTTONS AND MAKE HIM **WALK OFF** BEFORE HE FIGURED IT OUT.

HELLO? MISTER RULES LAWYER? DON'T YOU THINK THAT **SMACKS** JUST A LITTLE OF **CHEATING**??!!

CHEATING? NO WAY. THE **LAW OF SURVIVAL** SUPERCEDES **ALL** RULES - YOU KNOW THAT.



Previews

DECEMBER

See "The Innkeeper's Secret" in this issue!

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TSR 11372

ISBN 0-7869-1372-X



JANUARY

Vortex of Madness & Other Planar Perils

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By Chris Pramas

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System Guide to Aegis

A STAR*DRIVE® Accessory

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and Steven Schend

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See "The Knight's Watch" fiction in issue #267!

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Rise of the Titans

A DRAGONLANCE Adventure

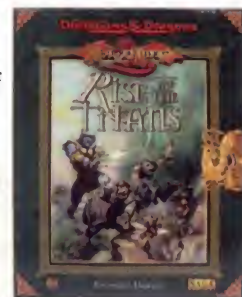
By Richard Dakan

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Arms & Equipment Guide

A DARK•MATTER Accessory

By Rich Redman and JD Wiker

Charlie Campbell, the Hoffmann

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armorer and procure-

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it all. In this *Arms &*

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runs the new agent

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other super

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Do'Urden must struggle against his

dreadful heritage and survive the

intrigues and murderous plots that are

part of everyday life in the kingdom of

the drow elves. When at last he

reaches the surface world, he will

find new perils in the windswept

passes of Icewind Dale. Yet there,

too, he encounters the men and

women who will become his stal-

wart companions in adventure.

\$17.95/\$23.95 CAN

TSR 21588

ISBN 0-7869-1588-9



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Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	19,524	18,312
Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	—	—
Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	32,148	31,536
Free Distribution Through the USPS	380	350
Free Distribution Outside the Mail	—	—
Total Free Distribution	380	350
Total Distribution	32,528	31,886
Copies not Distributed	21,243	19,133
Total	53,771	51,041
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	98.8	98.9

WHAT'S NEW?

By Phil Foglio

TODAY'S TOPIC IS **SHAPESHIFTERS!** DIABOLICAL CREATURES WHO CAN INDULGE IN **EVERYBODY'S** FAVORITE FANTASY - BECOMING WOMEN'S LINGERIE AND

WHOA! WHOSE FANTASY IS THAT?!



um... I'M TOLD IT'S **VERY COMMON** - IT IS NOT!

C'MON, **EVERYBODY** - NO - NOBODY!

OH. BUT -

AT LEAST THEY'D **BETTER NOT!!**

AH. MY MISTAKE THEN. - AND HOW!



ANYWAY - SHAPESHIFTERS CAN LOOK LIKE ANYTHING, BUT FOR SOME REASON, THEY HARDLY EVER CHOOSE TO LOOK **CUTE**.

OH SURE, I COULD, BUT WHERE'S THE CHALLENGE IN THAT? NOW GETTING A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS TO KISS A **FROG**... NOW THAT TAKES **SKILL**.

ALMOST AS MUCH SKILL AS GETTING A **FROG** TO THINK I'M A **PRINCESS!**



SOMETHING RARELY MENTIONED, BECAUSE IT'S INCONVENIENT, IS THAT EVEN IF YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR **SHAPE**, YOUR **MASS** SHOULD REMAIN THE SAME.

WE'VE LOST HIM.

... MAYBE NOT...



THERE IS ALSO A LONG LIST OF THINGS **SHAPECHANGERS** SHOULD AVOID **MIMICKING** -

HAMMERS, ARCHERY TARGETS, TRAFFIC CONES, CANDLES, ANCHORS, GONGS, DARTBOARDS, CRASH TEST DUMMIES, HANDKERCHIEFS, FIRE HYDRANTS -

AUUE

... SANDWICHES.

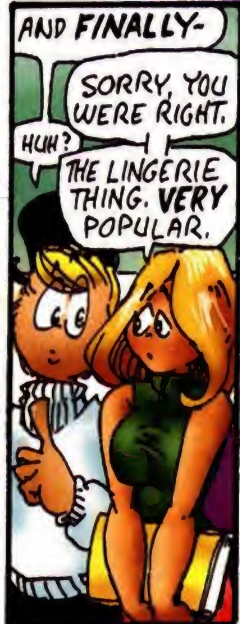


AND **FINALLY** -

SORRY, YOU WERE RIGHT.

HUH?

THE LINGERIE THING. VERY POPULAR.



HA! I KNEW WOMEN'S - **NOT WOMEN'S** BUT... **TRUST ME.**

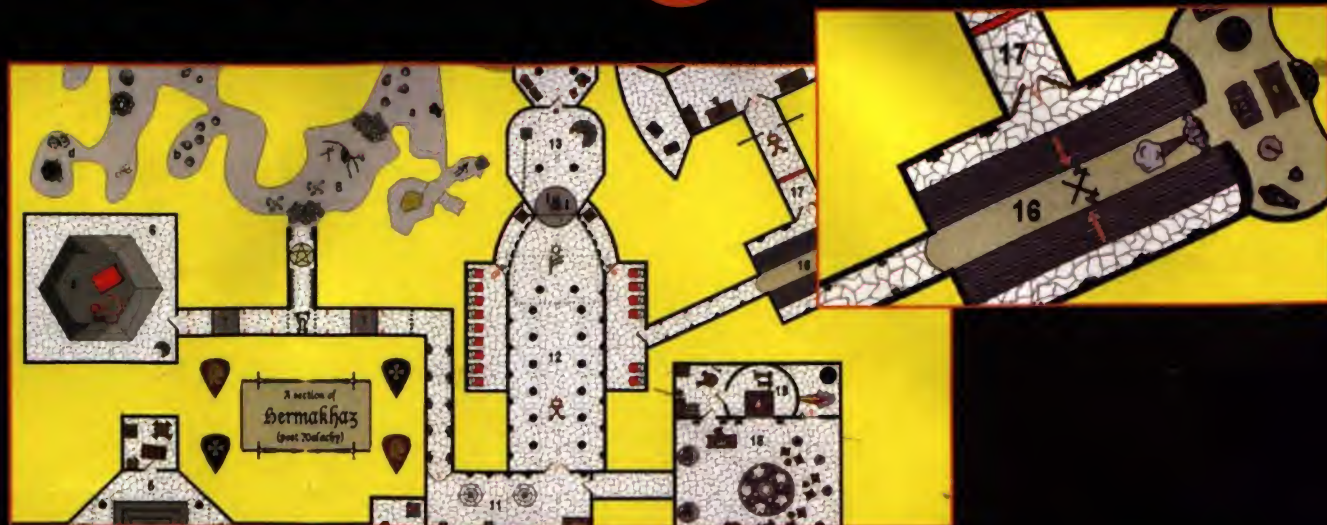


HELLO.



Windows® 95/98
& Windows® NT 4

New from Profantasy Software Ltd Dungeon Designer 2



Dungeon Designer 2 is the eagerly awaited first add-on product for Campaign Cartographer 2 and the Core Rules 2.0 Campaign Mapper.

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Requirements

DD2 requires Campaign Cartographer 2 or AD&D Core Rules 2.0 Campaign Mapper.
System requirements are any PC that runs Windows® 95/NT4/98 and an 800x600 display



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